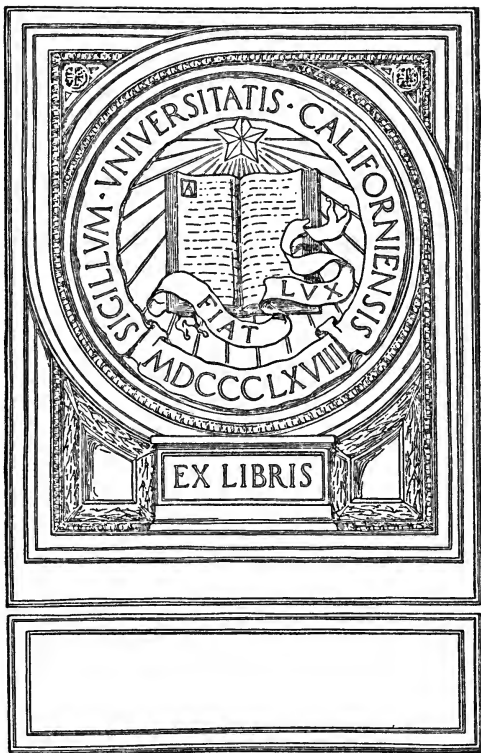


TILlicum TALES



*Seattle
Writers' Club*



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Tillicum Tales

BY

The Seattle Writers' Club

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SEATTLE
LOWMAN & HANFORD
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Laying the Ghost

BY

ELIZABETH C. DAUGHERTY



"The tide coming in."

Laying the Ghost

THE fame of Priest Hart as an exorcist reached over more than ten parishes. There were more than a hundred witnesses of that "driving out" but not all were equally able to give evidence; for it is unreasonable to assert that those who were lying down could see as much as those who were standing on them.

Yet every one insisted on giving a full account with many details of various incidents that did not occur. Priest Hart never would set them right but always got mad as fire whenever the subject was mentioned.

That is the reason I take it upon me to duly set forth what really did take place; also to relate the circumstance—because I think it ought to be told—how he, for it was a male ghost, came to be disembodied.

In life Tim was a grazier; and that rich! He had horses and cattle, fields and meadows, beside wealth of potatoes and garden truck galore. He lived in a palace by the sea—that is, it was a palace before it was burned by the murdering French.

Its name was Palmerstown. The old towers, covered by ivy, still stood up grandly, and could be seen as far out to sea as the Three Stags of

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Broadhaven. They were the landmark to the herring fleet when they came in from the deep sea fishing, Tim's boats in the lead.

The great kitchen, the servants' quarters, and the stables were uninjured by the fire, and afforded ample room for Tim and his helpers. The Palmers had built a new Palmerstown farther inland, and Tim had a lease on the old place.

He had neither chick nor child, being a bachelor, but his brother Donald, and his niece Kathy lived with him. Donald wasn't of much use, unless it were to drink up any whiskey that might be left over. But Kathy! Every one loved to have her near; she was so gay, so bright, so kind, and so good looking. A true type of that beauty which makes the west coast of Ireland famous.

Tim always said she was to have all he had to leave, even to the keeping of her old father, Donald. It was usually said that she had a fairy godmother; but her finest gifts could not equal the fact that Kathy was beautiful, young, rich, and lived in Ireland. It goes without saying that such a girl was engaged to be married and the course of true love was running very smooth between her and Jamie More, when one woeful day, Tim—poor old Tim—went down in the basement and hung himself to one of the great beams that supported the floor above.

Such an act was incomprehensible! An Irishman! A good Catholic to boot! Breaking into his own house of life and laying violent hands upon himself! Had he gone somewhere else to do it—but right under the kitchen, the main liv-

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ing room, and right over the big potato bin, nothing less; and no one able to get a bite to eat or mix a drop of drink without going down there after it! It was not like his good heart.

There were the vaults under the haunted towers where the wicked old Palmers used to serve out their enemies. Why couldn't he have gone there? He might have walked his fill, and added his pipe to the screeching that always arose when the winds were high. He must have known he would not be allowed to rest, going off as he did without making a will, and all unconfessed and unabsolved.

Never since a French man-of-war entered Sligo Bay and shelled Palmerstown, had there been such a commotion. The schoolmaster, the clerk, the sexton, as well as every neighbor who wished to show respect for Tim, came early and stayed late. They waked him until they were all "dacently" laid under the table. They went three together down the stairs to get provisions, and the first going down and the last coming back were always in a dreadful twither, for there was no knowing what might be reaching for the calves of their legs.

There was a question connected with Tim's walking, that stirred the minds of Donald and his master of ceremonies. How was he to find his clothes? Cold shivers came and went at the thought of hands feeling around the walls, and maybe catching at their own habiliments. At last a bright thought suggested that he would begin where he left off. So they hung the chain,

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the rope, and the good fustian suit, together with his cap and wig, on the hook from which he was lifted that sorrowful day.

Donald was now master. He set his bonnet in a different way from anything Tim had done. He put on more airs than the Palmer himself, and when Jamie More, flying on the wings of love, came to comfort Kathy he forbade him the house and told him he was no match for Katharine. He set everybody grinning by gravely announcing that he intended to take a second wife and expected to raise a large family. The orderly, decent household kept by Tim didn't know itself under Donald. He aggravated Priest Hart by cutting off the dole Tim had weekly given to the poor, and in a few days accomplished more of meanness and extravagance than Tim had done in a lifetime. He would have liked to curtail the masses for Tim but a wholesome fear of Priest Hart and a dread of ghosts restrained him.

This was the state of affairs when our cousin Mary came over from Dromore. She came in her father's new cart, bringing a sack of potatoes, and a pat of butter of her own churning, forby a jug of buttermilk. Our mother was a widow and the bit and sup were hard to come by.

Mary was a large, strong, active girl with a fine red head and eyes as blue as a glade's. She was like a breath from the sea on a summer day. The first thing she asked was:

Laying the Ghost

"Has Tim walked yet? They're talking of nothing else at Dromore, and they're saying what a poor creature young More is to allow himself to be choused out of his sweetheart like that."

"Young More and Kathy will dree their weird, an' tak the bitter along with the sweet, like ither folk," said mother.

"No, no, don't talk like that, Aunt Biddy, I'll never believe true love can be turned from its course so easily—not, at least, while I'm to the fore."

"Ye'll not be playing ony pliskies, Mary?"

"Sure not, Aunt Biddy; I'll be as steady as old time."

In the evening Mary proposed that we all go to the towers. Our mother shrank into herself and utterly refused, and it was against her will that little Biddy and I went.

I soon saw that Mary had some plan in her mind for she loitered on the sands under the plea of seeing the sun set and then stood with her back to it, looking inland. I knew she was waiting for Jamie More, who belonged to the constabulary. He looked very handsome in his uniform and came to us as soon as he was off duty. Mary sent me and my little sister away to play with the other children who were running up and down the sands and shooting pebbles into the sea.

When she cried to us to come on, she and Jamie were going up the long slope to the towers. Before we finally came up with them they were standing by the locked and barred outside door

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of the basement that was under the kitchen; beyond were the cellars under the servants' quarter and farther on were the vaults under the ruined towers.

We all went together to the kitchen entrance, where we parted, Jamie not being allowed to come in. We found a number of people sitting by the peat fire. The schoolmaster was telling a story of Brian Borue. Kathy was sitting apart from the rest in the shadows for the candles were not yet lighted. Mary went over to her and they whispered together. Biddy and I went to the fire where we found a stool and both sat down.

I don't know how long we had listened to the master, who had got through the story and was disputing with the clerk about the site of Tara's Hall, when a slight jar made the glasses on the table rattle. Every one started up and looked at each other.

"It's the sea breaking in at Downpatrick!" said the schoolmaster, going to the window and looking out. "The tide is coming in like a troop of white horses."

Again there was a jar that made the kitchen quiver in all its timbers, and there was also the distinct rattle of a chain. A woman pouring out tea, kept on pouring, until the cup running over, began to fill her shoes. Donald took the whiskey bottle and going into the pantry turned it up and drank it out to the last drop, then he came to me and said:

Laying the Ghost

"Run away, my little man, and bring Priest Hart."

I had not been gone many minutes, but when I returned with the priest there was scarcely standing room in the kitchen. The fishing village and the coast-guard station were emptied into it. The noise in the basement was something to terrify.

A man was trying to light a candle by poking it into the glowing embers of the peat, but he only succeeded in melting the tallow. As he rose up, quaking, an elbow knocked it out of his hand, and a foot promptly made a greasy smudge of it on the hearth. The priest took a piece of paper from his pocket, made a spill and lighted another candle.

"Why are ye stamping round here like Bulls of Bashan while thieves carry everything away from the basement?"

"The outside door is locked and barred; anyone going into the basement would have to pass through this room, Your Reverence," said Donald.

"I'm not so sure of that, Ragan," turning to a man of great strength and courage, "go to the outside door and see if it is really fast."

"Fayther, I think I have inimies out there."

"Jesus Christ had enemies, and he met them."

"And phwat did they do to him, fayther?" asked Ragan.

The priest gave a snort and turning, walked, candle in hand, to the head of the stairs. My hand was on the tail of his coat and Biddy was

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holding onto my little roundabout. He must have felt a pull, for looking back he saw his following. Some of the grimness went out of his face when he saw us.

At the head of the stairs there was a niche and a pedestal where a saint and a candle had stood, shedding light and protection in the old Palmer days. Saint and candle were gone, though sorely needed now, but the pedestal remained. The priest reached his hand and onto this I scrambled; then I reached down and the priest reached up and Biddy was soon beside me out of the way of the crowd in the kitchen, that heaved and surged like an angry sea.

The tumult below had ceased for awhile and every one was listening intently. The priest in a commanding voice, ordered the person, or persons, in the basement to come up; assuring them at the same time that they should not be punished for the disturbance they had made, while if they persisted—. He was interrupted by wild screeching, rattling, and pounding.

“Thry the Latin, fayther, dear,” suggested Donald.

The priest moved a step as though he would have gone down the stairs, but the cries of the women prevented him.

From below came an uproar that sounded like giants might be pulling out the foundation stones and playing at pitch and toss with them, mingled with the rattling of chains, groanings, and wild cries.

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Then Priest Hart began to lay on the Latin. With round, full voice, that rose above the din below, he poured out the sounding vowels. When he came to "Exorciso te," something like a whirlwind appeared at the bottom of the stairs. With bounds and leaps it devoured the distance and in a mad rush reached the landing.

There was no mistaking Tim; there was the long black hair tangled over the face, the fustian cap securely tied on, the clouted shoes—I could have sworn to every patch—and above all the old shooting jacket with the wide pockets, made to carry game, and just as in the old time when he used to go round among the poor, one pocket was full of fish, the other of potatoes.

He did not stop for me to note these things, but came and went, like the lightning's flash. The priest drew back, at the same time the crowd pushed Ragan forward; they met and both went down, big Ragan on top. Tim seemed to be making straight for Donald. That good man and true, trying to get out of the direct line, slipped and sat down on a bit scythe that he had fastened on a black thorn stick, and carried as a carnal weapon.

Speeding on, the apparition came to the door. A boy, driving a cart by, and hearing the commotion had stopped directly in front, blocking the entrance. He said Tim walked through the cart like it was thin air, and then made for the sea with very great speed; going in with a splash that caused the waves to cover the sands, and sent up a column of steam higher than the Kra-

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ken ever reared his head—I shall always regret missing that.

When Tim had fully gone, and the crowd had got its breath, it kindly stepped off Priest Hart. He rose and shook the dust from his raiment, and then made for the door as straight and almost as swiftly as Tim had done.

The women began to make fresh tea, and the men took up Donald and laid him face downward on his bed. A select committee undertaking to care for his wound.

Biddy and I slid down from our perch and ran home. Mary was there before us, boiling potatoes and broiling herring. Our mother was pressing something into the fire with a poker, that gave out a strong odor of burning hair and fustian.

I went up to Mary and leaned against her. Her vivid coloring and bright, kindly ways made her very attractive to children.

“What could Tim want with fish and potatoes where he’s gone?” I asked. “I saw the pockets of his old shooting jacket were full.”

“Just to think of that, now,” she said, stroking my hair.

After a little Priest Hart came in. Mother dropped the poker and putting her apron over her face, began to whimper.

“Bridget,” said the priest sternly, “take down your apron and stop snivelling. An’ ye can’t control your family let them go to the devil in peace.”

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Turning to Mary, he looked in her eyes. "An' I were yor confessor its the heavy penance I'd lay on ye. Ye ought to have a husband and a houseful of children."

"An' is thot the penance ye'd lay on me, fayther dear? Now sit ye down and have some supper for it's tired and hungry ye must be."

"I am that," said the priest, sitting down.

Mary deftly mixed a stiff tumbler and he began to relax; a twinkle came into his eye and his tongue lost the caustic flavor that had seasoned it all the evening.

"Mary," said he, "when I was lying back there with my head down and my heels up, the whole heft of Ragan on my stomach, Tim had the impudence to throw the laugh at me as he sped by; and as I'm a sinful man, there was a blue glint in his eye, and a lock of red hair gleamed through his old wig."

"Fayther," said Mary starting up, a look of concern on her face, "did I make your glass too strong, or has some one else been mixing for ye? I scare knew how much I was pouring, I was so worried about Kathy."

"You shall not cast any imputations on my sobriety, my most ingenuous Mary, the glass was not over strong, and I was fasting from everything but sin, when I innocently accepted your hospitality. Set your tender heart at rest about Kathy. I found her and young More wandering on the sands like two babes in the wood, and I e'en took them into the church and married them, though it was after hours."

A Gordian Knot

BY

SARAH PRATT CARR,

Author of "The Iron Way"

A Gordian Knot



A-WA-NEE gazed helplessly over the sea of summer millinery. Her quick ear caught ill-suppressed giggles from a knot of shop girls down the aisle, caught the sneer, the sibilant "squaw."

She frowned, and an ugly light gleamed from under her lowered lashes. Squaw! Were they not all squaws—women? Her fleeting, sidewise look intercepted wily glances fixed upon her husband. He had walked a little farther down, and was standing before a heaped table, perplexity in brow and finger as he turned carefully the wire support of this and that "Paris model."

"Which one do you want, Wa-wa-nee?" he called to her softly.

As she wobbled toward him on her high heels a great square of sky and Sound flashed, luminous, through the open window. "Me no care, Jim," she answered indifferently, her heart drawn with her eyes through the window. A sudden move loosened her comb, and it fell rattling on the bare floor. She reached for it, took off her hat, and, regardless of curious eyes, twisted her tight black coil tighter, pulled out her frizzed bang, and reset the comb. The bronze-

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brown felt with its two stiff quills went on at a ludicrous angle, and she jabbed in the silver pins awkwardly. Suddenly her eyes dilated, focused on a dim object rounding into the northern view. Log or boat, men or posts,—city eyes could not have told, but Wa-wa-nee's whole tense body disclosed a keener vision.

Jim called to her again a little sharply. "Which one do you want?" He was still seeking something that looked as if it might "belong" to his alien wife.

The Indian girl laughed mirthlessly, and pointed a slim finger to a white cloud of tulle and blush roses. "I like that—that glory-hat."

"Oh, that isn't for you," he said, and added more softly, "Don't laugh, Wa-wa-nee; and put on your gloves."

She tugged at them stolidly, and laughed again, the same meaningless cackle. Why had Jim told her not to laugh? In the cabin far away he had always liked her to laugh. She never felt like it in this big, strange village of much noise, yet before these white squaws she wished to please Jim.

He saw her disappointment, and again peered into the forest of hats for something he did not find. The young woman who had been pulling out drawers and boxes came forward to serve him. He gave her a grateful look. She had helped him before, and she alone of all the town's saleswomen had treated Wa-wa-nee as if she were human.

A Gordian Knot

"I don't see——" he began; "the winter things suited her better. Yet if you hadn't helped me I wouldn't have found anything."

"This will do, I think." She held up a shining, coppery straw with a bit of orange in the trimming.

"Let me see how it looks on you, please."

It suited her, and Jim's honest face disclosed his admiration. From far down the store came a renewed buzzing. Jim's face clouded, puzzled, as he saw a slow flush stain the saleswoman's cheek.

But Wa-wa-nee understood. Fire leaped in her eye, she was ready to fight for the white squaw who looked at her kindly.

"It doesn't look the same on her," Jim ventured when the clerk had adjusted the hat to Wa-wa-nee's black crown.

"No; how can it? It isn't made for her. None of them are. In her own dress she's beautiful, in our white woman's toggery she's—she's out of place."

Wa-wa-nee's face was noncommittal. She shot a longing glance at the spreading tulle "creation" and turned away. She did not see Jim pay for both hats, but followed him, glaring at the giggling girls as she passed down the store to the street.

They fared silently, Jim stopping now and then as Wa-wa-nee dropped behind, Indian fashion. At a corner he left her for his business and she went on alone to the home on the bluff.

She halted on the high porch, gazed far out

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to the north where the blue green forest swept down the mountain side to meet the green blue waters of the Sound, to heedless vision a scene ever the same, to Wa-wa-nee a restless, changing world, theatre of all her dreams. Around the end of the island to the north,—that way one went—home! Up there where the sea wooed the forest, where the warming sun lingered later each day, there lived the people she loved; mother, father and brother—they would be out in the big canoe now—the little brown sister, and —another. She could hear the huskies quarrelling over their scant scraps, see the feathery fir tips, the scarlet hinting in sallal and blackberry.

Suddenly she drew the absurd hatpins and flung them with the coppery brown hat to the floor. Hairpins followed. One she ground with her heel viciously. With a side comb she dressed her long locks into shining braids, then walked down the porch to the door, her lithe figure protesting against corset, band, and shoe.

When she came forth again it was in beaded tunic, bangles, and moccasins. She was tall and dark and strong, like the great cedar tree that buttressed the porch. She leaned against the ragged trunk, her motionless repose welding her to the scene. Yet life emanated from her. The lapping tide below, rustle of leaf and flower, waterfowl's flight, every growing, shimmering thing in nature was kin to her, incarnate in her.

An Indian stepped over the brink of the bluff.

"Lak-a-wah!" It was a cry, yet her lips hardly moved.

A Gordian Knot

He strode to her with swift feet. "Wa-wa-nee, come with me." He reached one hand to hers, with the other pointed northward.

"No!" Her face was wooden, her voice hard. Yet as an hour earlier fire gleamed in her eye.

"Moons gone, when nights were long and dark, I came, and you said, 'No.' Now the salmon runs in the rivers, the kam-ass is ready for digging, the sallal berry and the wild currant are red, and Wa-wa-nee's flesh is sick for *tillicums*, for friends." He touched her arm, less round than half a year before. "Lak-a-wah's heart is empty, the fire in his tepee is dead." He grasped her wrist.

"No! Go back!" She pulled free and stood motionless, but the gripping hand behind her left red stains on the cedar bark.

"Jim is *kultus*. I——, I *man-a-loose*——."

Wa-wa-nee sprang forward and caught his shoulder in a stinging clutch. "No, no! You not kill Jim!" She pulled a crucifix from under her tunic and held it before him. "White man, red man, you no more kill!"

"Jim is *kul*——."

"No, Jim is good, not bad! You not kill Jim. Say it!" She put the crucifix in his hand and lifted it high in both her own. "Say, it, Lak-a-wah!" she repeated solemnly.

He hesitated, but her passion compelled him. Afterward he hung his head and looked uncertainly out over the water.

"Go, Lak-a-wah," she urged softly, looking northward.

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He went away soon and sullenly, dropping out of sight over the bluff.

The sun wheeled across the sky and glared slantingly on the still Sound; dark shadows swept out from the western shore. Still motionless Wa-wa-nee stood against the tree, cheek and eye forsaken of color and flame. Spiritless she watched long, gleaming lines that widened from the north-pointing prow of a boat. Two men were at the paddles. As they lifted rythmically she could see the diamond drops fall, fancied she could hear the feathered dip, till at last the lessening speck disappeared around the island.

A childish cry aroused her.

"Be-be! Little Jim!" she called, and ran to meet two small boys coming up the hill. "What's the matter, Be-be?" She caught the sobbing child in her arms.

"Oh, he's blubbering 'cause I whipped a boy for callin' you a squaw. An' Jim, he see the bleed—by golly! You are a squaw!"

"Squaw! Squaw!" she whispered bitterly to herself. She put the smaller boy down, and gently wiped the sand and blood from Jack's scratched face. "It's bad to fight," she said half-heartedly.

Little Jim found his voice. "Teacher, he see 'um, an' he make shame to dat odder boy," he piped in brotherly sympathy. "But for why you wear Injun clo'es? Papa, he say 'no.' You look all squaw now."

A Gordian Knot

"I'll be no more squaw. I'll be good mamma all the time now," she whispered, and led them into the house.

It was spotlessly clean, so much the Sisters had taught her; and it was large and comfortably furnished; but of homelikeness there was none. In a few minutes she was again harnessed in conventional dress, her straight hair coiled and topped with a tinsel butterfly. She bathed Jack's bruised face and hands, tidied both boys, and prepared the evening meal. But her somber face did not brighten till a huge box arrived, and she opened it to find the "glory hat."

Jim came home, heard the story of the fight without comment, and ate in silence, while Wa-wa-nee minced about on her high heels, and served him well, yet smiled inanely, believing she was acting like the "store squaw."

Later Jim took the boys out. Wa-wa-nee wondered as she washed the dishes what Jim said to them during these frequent walks. She knew they would, as always, be kinder to her when they returned.

Out on the bluff she watched the sunset flame die in the west. She wished the boys were in bed that she might unmoor her boat below and follow the silver shaft of moonlight that began to flutter across the darkening Sound. She longed to get away from Jim tonight, from the books he tried to read to her, that talked a language she could not understand. She wanted to be in the midst of the thousand utterances of

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wood-world and water-world, a-lilt with summer song and wooing. This language she knew; could speak.

Boyish voices floating up the street recalled her. She went in, turned on the lights, brought forth her dearest treasure, the graphophone, and stood comforted, entranced, while it ground out "Bedelia." She took the "glory hat" from its box, perched it perkily, wrong side to, on her black coil, and peered at herself in the mirror. Round and round she turned in mute admiration till steps on the porch startled her, when she snatched it off and hung it guiltily beside the straw just as the boys racketed in.

"Bill's——"

"Mr. Baxter," she corrected. She hated this new chum of Jim's who looked at her scornfully, and left Jim restless after his visits. She hurried the boys to bed, listening perfunctorily to their prayers, while she strained to catch the conversation in the living room. Once in her own chamber no nice scruples kept her ear from the keyhole. That was her usual way of receiving Jim's callers; he could not persuade her to appear.

"You're a fool, Jim! Ship her, and get a decent mother for them little chaps. There's more'n one girl that would be glad of the chance to stylish up this house, that would be a Jim-dandy wife and mother, too."

"Shut up, Bill!"

Jim's voice rang heartily through the keyhole; yet Wa-wa-nee rose and crept stealthily

A Gordian Knot

along the wall, tore down the straw hat, muffled it in her skirt and crushed it shapeless.

"I bet she likes some buck Injun a heap better'n she does you."

"Shut up, I tell you!" Jim growled again.

Wa-wa-nee's cheek grew more coppery. She picked up the hat and penitently pulled it back to shape.

"How'd you come by her, anyway? You ain't never told me that, Jim."

"No, I don't talk much about it. The boys' mother, Ma-la-la, was Wa-wa-nee's half sister. One of the old-time Alaska prospectors married a chief's daughter, Ma-la-la's mother, and before he died three or four years after, he gave his baby to the Sisters. The mother married an Injun later, and Wa-wa-nee's the oldest of several children."

"But how come you in it? You don't belong to such an outfit."

"As much as to any. San Francisco streets mothered me, poverty fathered me, the slums educated me. At sixteen I drifted to Alaska, nearly died of exposure, and was nursed to life by the nuns and Ma-la-la. She was the best thing I'd struck so far! I bid for her an' got her. But she didn't last long." He stopped, and the other man did not speak.

Wa-wa-nee stirred uneasily.

"Before she went," Jim went on slowly, "she asked me to take Wa-wa-nee, and—— and—— Good God, man! What could I do? Alaska,

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two kids, and not a white woman in five hundred miles that would have me!"

Wa-wa-nee heard him rise and pace the floor impatiently, and her hand kept silent time with his step.

"Did she want to marry you?"

"You don't ask one of them Injun women if she wants to. You say, 'Come,' and usually she does,—willingly if you take her to the priest. Besides, Wa-wa-nee liked the kids."

Wa-wa-nee breathed hard, and turned gentle eyes toward the children's door.

"What brought you out of it at last?"

Jim stopped his walk. "I made a pile, and that brought me up against men who knew something. I got a few books and tried to teach myself. The boys shucked the Injun as they grew; an' I decided to bring 'em out and give 'em a white man's chance."

"Bully thing all right."

"But I made a mistake. The little chaps are doing fine, but Wa-wa-nee's pining herself to death. Money can't make this city life possible for her. I'm going back—— I can send the boys out later—— and take my medicine like a—— oh, my God!"

Wa-wa-nee's nails sunk deep into her palm, but a strange lightness crept into all her body.

"Jim, you're a chump! Shuck the squaw, stay here, an' make a man of yourself."

"Squaw!" Wa-wa-nee hissed; and a malignant light made shining points of her beady eyes.

A Gordian Knot

"Damn you! There'd be no man left if I did that. Wa-wa-nee's a mighty sight whiter'n I'd be if I did that. A fine example for my boys!"

The Indian woman heard him walk to the window, caught a passion new to her in Jim's voice.

"Bill, you mean well but you don't know," Jim went on more calmly. "If it was your fix you'd tumble all right. Let's drop it for good."

The visitor spoke a few words inaudible to Wa-wa-nee, and left.

Long the man at the window and the woman behind the door were silent, motionless. The overhead moon shone palely in upon them; the pitying night whispered comfort. But both were numb and dumb.

Finally Wa-wa-nee heard him set about the night chores, and slipped to bed. When he came her eyes were closed, her face calm. He was soon beside her, tossing restlessly, yet striving not to disturb her.

The waiting seemed endless, but at last he was breathing deeply, evenly. She crept out, dressed stealthily in her Indian clothes, and stole into the boys' room. There she turned on the light, carrying the extension lamp shaded in her hand to the bed. The night was warm, and the children lay half covered, their little bodies relaxed in all the soft curves of babyhood. Wa-wa-nee knelt and kissed them, on cheek and hair and brow; and last one arched foot that hung over the bedside. A sob caught her throat, and one

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of the children moved. Instantly the light was out, the door softly closed.

She stood a moment hesitating. A pale moonbeam fell athwart Jim's rugged features, softening, beautifying them. Wa-wa-nee gazed steadily but did not go nearer. "Good man, Jim," she whispered, drew the shade, and slipped to the kitchen where she set a sponge for breakfast batter cakes, that Jim liked. She peered about uncertainly, took up her small burdens, and went out. One long look she bent upon the house from the edge of the bluff, and disappeared.

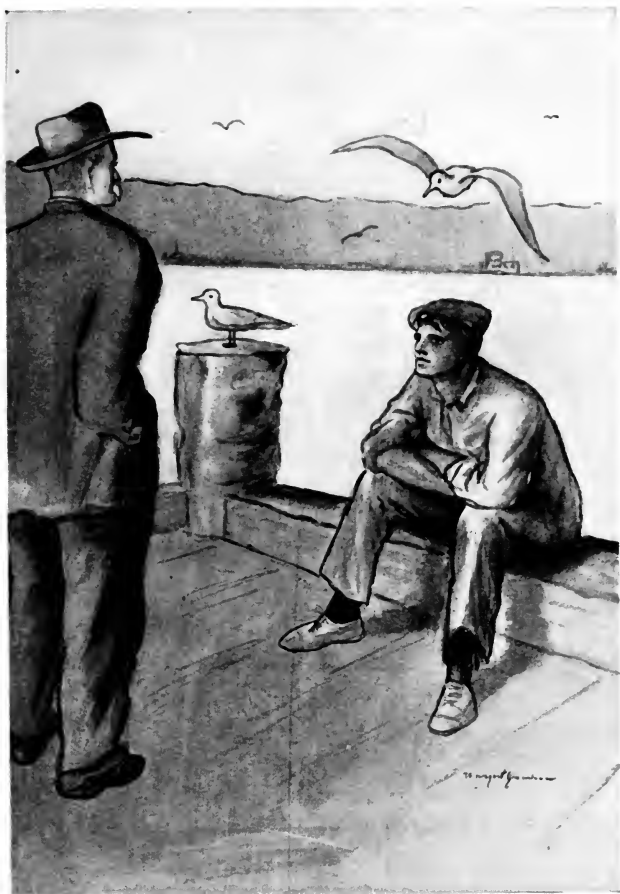
An hour later the moon hung low in the south. Its broad silver track stretched far northward; and straight along its radiance Wa-wa-nee was rowing bravely. The "glory hat" waved a pale greeting to the moon, and the graphophone in front of her gaily spluttered out upon the still shores, "Bedelia!"



Gulls

BY

EMMA PARSONS JOSEPHANS



"'Are gulls good for anything?' said the stranger."

Gulls



THE FLYER was late on her mid-day trip from Tacoma to Seattle.

The crowd awaiting her at the Seattle dock grew impatient and moved restlessly to and fro. Dudley Armstrong, lean-

ing idly against a pile at the edge of the pier, was attracted by the nervous motions of a shrewd-faced man of middle age who paced back and forth near him, a little removed from the main crowd. He appeared anxious to escape notice himself, yet eagerly curious to see each newcomer.

Dudley was a sociable fellow, so after a time he accosted the stranger.

"Lookin' for your folks?" he inquired.

The man wheeled sharply and cast a suspicious look upon Dudley. Apparently it satisfied him, for he laughed—a short, hard laugh.

"I'm trying to give my loving friends the slip; but if that boat don't come p.d.q. I can't make it," he replied.

"What's up?" asked Dudley, interested.

The stranger studied his face for a moment.

"It's this way," he said. "I've just come

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down from the North with my clean-up. A couple of men that knew me up there are layin' to get it from me. They've hung on to me like grim death, but I'll fool 'em yet, if that blamed boat shows up in time. I agreed to meet 'em at the inter-urban station, but if I don't get off soon they may catch on to my game, and come over here. That's what I'm afraid of—I want to shake 'em."

"Kind o' dangerous business, ain't it?" said Dudley. "I should think you'd put your money in the bank; those fellows might do you up—such things have been known to happen—."

"They ain't any too good for it—but I've no use for banks—too much red tape—I like my money where I can get at it in a hurry when I want it—and I know how to take care of it—don't you forget that."

The stranger showed such evident inclination to change the subject that Dudley asked no more questions, but began to speak of other matters, and the talk drifted to the sea-gulls screaming and wheeling about the water-front. It seemed to Dudley a little odd that a man who had been "up North" should display entire ignorance of the habits of such common water-fowl, but he good-naturedly undertook to enlighten him.

"Are they good for anything?" asked the man. "Back East, where I live, they'd strip off the feathers for the women's hats. Ought to be some use made of 'em. Are they good to eat?"

Gulls

Dudley rose to a realization of his opportunity.

"Some folks eat 'em—they serve 'em at the restaurants as spring chicken, and in tamales. I don't care for 'em myself—apt to be fishy—but you bet your life they're good for something. I'm getting a good income from 'em myself, right now."

"How's that?"

"It's a long story. If you want to hear it we better sit down—sittin's cheap."

"Now go ahead," said the stranger, when they had found a satisfactory resting place.

"The beginnin' goes back to a day just about like this two years ago. I'd just got into Seattle the night before from the East, and was out bright and early, looking for a job, for I was broke. I was waitin' for the Bremerton boat, hearing there was men wanted at the Navy Yard. I didn't get a job, but I got a few ideas that have worked out pretty good since.

"I'd been watching an old gull like that one tetering on the pile yonder. He'd followed the boat all the way over, and was comin' back with her; it's wonderful how they fly—can keep it up twenty-four hours at a stretch—but usually they take a nap in between night and day somewhere. Coming back to Seattle I was sitting just under the edge of the upper deck, at the stern. I happened to glance up, and there the old chap was perched, tail sticking out just above my head. I grabbed quick and hauled him down; he bit my finger, and in the scuffle some of his breast

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feathers came out; they were as soft and downy as goose feathers—and it set me to thinkin'. I'm quite a hand to think about little things like that. After awhile I let him go, but I had a sort o' feelin' that maybe he and I'd meet again some day.

"Next day I was down on the docks again; those birds kind o' charmed me. I noticed they all seemed to come from down Georgetown way, so I took a trip down there to see what drew 'em. Near's I could judge, there was millions of 'em.

"Towards night they began to fly off in squads past Alki Point, past Three Tree Point, and on out of sight. It took me all of two weeks to find out where they roosted, but when I did my scheme began to shape itself. Nights, after I was through at the shop—I'm a brass worker by trade—I worked on a device I was getting ready to be patented—a self-closing chicken-house door. It was easy enough to get one to do the trick, but there was a hitch when it came to learning it to work just the right minute—when the last fowl was in—before some fool hen took a notion to walk out again; but I got it.

"When I'd saved up enough money to buy a boat I cruised around the Sound nights, lookin' for a place near enough to get to easy, yet hid so's not to attract notice. When I found it I began gettin' things together."

"What was you driving at?" asked the stranger.

Gulls

Dudley settled back comfortably in his seat.

"That's what I'm tellin' you," he replied. The stranger rose, took a searching look at the crowd, then resumed his place and attitude of listener.

"Next thing was to fix up some sort of shelter till I could afford to build a shack. There was an old fish-net I'd picked up on the beach, rotten and full of holes, but by doubling it once or twice, fastening the corners to some trees, and covering the whole with fir boughs, it made a dandy shed.

"When my livin' arrangements was O. K. I took wire nettin' and built two cages, high enough for a man to stand up in, 'bout twelve feet long, and covered on top with the nettin'. Then I took a trip over to Seattle after bait, and to throw up my job in town."

"What sort of bait did you have?"

"What didn't I have'd be more like it. Talk about smells! That boat-load of stuff perfumed the whole Sound country—lengthways and sideways and up and down. Had to plug up my own nose to keep it out enough so's I could get it home. That night I cut it up into chunks, put some into the far end of the cages, and buried the rest; I figured I had enough on hand for about a week. Then I turned in and slept, for I was wore out.

"Next morning I heard a little noise in the cages, and raised up to look; bait was all gone and half-a-dozen or so birds pickin' round—not enough to swing them patent doors shut—cage had to be full-up for that. But when I looked

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to where I'd buried the rest of the stuff there was gulls a-plenty, but not a scrap of feed—they'd robbed me of my pile.

"I sneaked out of bed and managed to shut one of the cages with a few birds inside; and say! Maybe I didn't have fun that day! You see, I meant to pluck 'em, and start an industry in feathers. You'd have died laughin' to see those birds when I got through with 'em—the way they acted. A goose is brought up to expect pluckin' 'bout once in so often; gulls ain't—they went plumb crazy. They flopped 'round in the air as if they was drunk—then they'd drop down on the water—find it cold—bound up like a rubber ball—go reeling 'round again in circles—couldn't balance right. After awhile they seemed to get the hang of it again; then they'd fly off a ways, and come back and strut 'round on the beach in the sun to warm up. It sure was funny.

"At first I worried considerable as to what was going to happen when my plucked birds should fly away, and folks begin to take notice. Gulls ain't exactly *sacred* birds, but the Government protects 'em—knows there's money in 'em; if I was found out, there was a good chance of trouble comin' my way. But I needn't have worried; goin' away was the last thing them darned birds thought of—they knew well enough they'd struck a soft snap—all there was for 'em to do was to hang around and kill time between feeds. I baited the cages again as soon as I could get some more fodder, and this time there

Gulls

wasn't no hitch; I had 'em both full, and my work cut out for a week ahead.

"The plucked birds got to be a nuisance—always under foot—and so tame I had to fairly club 'em off. But there was compensations, for the hens began laying; I'd find nests in every spot big enough to hold an egg. Ever see a gull's egg? Well, they're a little smaller than a common hen's egg—'bout like a pullet's. I took a couple dozen to town first time I went; the commission men kicked about the size, but they take 'em right along. They mix 'em in with hen's eggs, and customers never know the difference. Course I can furnish 'em a little cheaper than hen's eggs, so it's a good thing for the commission men. Gulls is good layers, too. I get so many eggs, sometimes I wonder if they don't lay two a day—but I s'pose they don't.

"Then there's phosphates. If I had the means to keep a dozen men and teams to work, I could do a business in guano that would make old Chile sit up and rub her eyes. A man don't need to go away from Seattle with a gold-mine like that at his very door, as you might say. If he does want a change there's Alaska—Cram jam full of gulls, too; it would take a lifetime to use 'em up—and then you couldn't. But it takes capital to get started, and that's what I ain't got—yet. If I had a little backin'—. What gets me is that with all the years this Coast has been settled I'm the first man to see the possibilities in gulls. There's practically no end to 'em—gulls, or possibilities, either. If it wasn't for the

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twenty-five-dollar fine for killin' one, I could sell enough broilers every year to knock the regular chicken industry higher'n a kite; and squabs wouldn't have a show beside young gulls, which is lots meatier, and have more flavor. Talk about the American Eagle for our national emblem! He ain't in it with the American Seagull! If my partner hadn't gone away and left me short-handed—"

An oath from the stranger interrupted. "There come those skunks!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet. At the same moment the *Flyer's* whistle sounded close at hand and the crowd pressed toward the gang-plank. The stranger lingered.

"See here, young fellow, what's your name?"

"Dudley Armstrong, Alki Point."

"If what you've told me is straight and you can prove it after I come back, I'd like to back you in some of these things—I can see there's good money in 'em. You just freeze on to this wad, and hold the chance open for me a couple of weeks, will you? I'll drop you a line when I'm ready to come back."

Dudley's fingers closed about the roll of bills thrust into his hand, but he clutched the stranger's arm to detain him.

"S'posin' you don't come back?"

"Then blow it in—there's plenty more where that came from." Then, in a lower tone: "I'd rather you had it than them," indicating two men who were already on the vessel's deck. "Let 'em search. They'll find before I get through

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with 'em that I've fooled 'em once more. Good-bye!"

He was gone, nodding farewell from the steamer's side before Dudley recovered presence of mind. After the boat pulled out he went to a retired spot and examined the roll; it contained five hundred dollars, in crisp, new bank notes of various denominations—fifty, twenty, ten and five. What could the man be thinking of—he must be insane—or a millionaire—to throw money about like that. The more Dudley pondered the more puzzled he became—the more ashamed of his own part in the transaction. He was in the habit of amusing himself and his friends by giving free rein to his naturally vivid imagination, and had to perfection the matter-of-fact, convincing manner of the born joker; it had never occurred to him that the stranger was taking his narrative seriously, and he did not enjoy the sensation of having obtained his money by false pretenses, however absurd in themselves.

When Dudley called upon Elsie Whitney that evening she at once perceived that he was inwardly troubled, and coaxed the story from him. Before he had finished her eyes were glowing with impatience.

"I didn't suppose there was a man on earth green enough to swallow a yarn like that," he grumbled. "How shall I explain?"

"*Don't* explain. All you have to do is to '*make good*,'" she told him.

Dudley failed to catch her meaning.

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"Don't you see, Dud, dear? You've hit upon a good scheme—you really have. That man is no tenderfoot—he's a shrewd business man, and was quick to see the value of your idea. While he's away you must just hurry and do what you told him you *had* done; then when he comes back *show him*—get him in as partner—branch out—boom the business—and our fortune is made. Oh, Dud, *don't* you see? Oh, why wasn't I born a man, so I could do things like this? It's the chance of a lifetime!"

Dudley looked stupidly at her, wondering if all the world—his world—were going daft; or could it be that he himself was "a little off?" Elsie granted him short time in which to solve the problem; she was wrought up to wild enthusiasm, and rattled on at no loss for words or ideas, which multiplied, even while she gave them voice.

"I can help you, Dudley. Don't you remember that little cove where we ate our lunch last Fourth of July? That's the ideal place for your cages; you have your tent and the boat. It ought not to cost much to get started."

The girl's enthusiasm and faith were contagious. Dudley "pooh-poohed" her suggestions, but he listened.

"And I'll find customers for the feathers. Mama will come with me and camp somewhere near you, and we can dry and prepare them, and—"

"Gather the eggs for market?" he asked, scornfully.

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"Yes, Dud, I will; and when I've saved enough egg-money for a gown, we needn't wait any longer—"

Dud had no further objections to urge. She actually talked him into believing the plan feasible; and when at last he left her, he was pledged to put into immediate execution the dream of his idle fancy. Misgivings assailed him as soon as he was beyond the sound of her voice, but he went to work next morning as per agreement. When, towards evening of the second day thereafter he called to report progress, she met him with glowing accounts of her own experience.

"You *must* go ahead now, Dud, for I've taken orders enough for pillows alone to keep us busy all summer. You see, I happened to remember that Mollie O'Brien, who works at the Bon Marche, is engaged to the man at the head of their mattress department, so I went first to see her. She called him right down, and you just ought to have heard me talk business. I showed him one of those goose feather pillows mama has made for us when we— No, dear, I didn't pretend we could furnish goose feathers; I said we could give him *something just as good*, at a cheaper rate; that we were just introducing our goods in Seattle with a view to putting in a plant if conditions warrant. You see, Mollie had told me the firm is bidding on contracts for furnishing ever so many of the big new hotels, and with conventions, and the A.-Y.-P. Exposition, there's bound to be a big demand for pillows. He called the proprietor and I made them

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an offer—that, if they would buy of us exclusively, we would furnish pillows exactly like sample for two dollars a pair instead of three, what they're paying now. That's the large size, you know; there's no use bothering with the rest—we want the *best* trade, or nothing. It ended in their giving me a trial order of two dozen; then I thought 'if they see it, others will;' so I went to all the big stores, and I've orders ahead for eleven dozen pillows."

Dudley groaned aloud. Elsie's face clouded.

"Aren't you pleased, dear? I'm so encouraged—"

"But, Elsie, remember; I'm not sure I can catch a single bird—I've never done it. If I could I don't know the first thing about drying feathers—where on earth could I put 'em—"

"What's the matter with finding out how from the encyclopedia? Besides, I agreed to look after that part," said Elsie, aggrieved.

"I haven't told you yet all I did," she continued, "but if you don't care to hear—"

"Of course I care, you silly girl! Go ahead!"

"This morning I met Jessie Evans, and she insisted on taking me out home for lunch. I didn't mean to say a word to her about this, but I was so full of plans I couldn't help it. She thinks it's a splendid idea. We agreed that I really ought to be getting the ticks ready, so as not to be rushed when the time comes; so we measured the sample pillow, and she went with me to the 'Bon'—I thought I'd patronize the firm that gave us our first order—and I ordered



"Here is a sample pillow."

Gulls

the very best ticking that's made—three whole pieces; and Jessie is coming over here every day to help me until we get them all made. There! What do you think of that?"

"I think I'll have to hustle to catch up! *Eleven dozen pillows*, and not so much as a pin-feather on hand!" Again Dudley groaned in sheer despondency.

Elsie flushed with resentment.

"What is the matter with you, Dudley Armstrong?" she demanded. "I thought we agreed to go into this thing together heart and soul, so as to hurry up the time when we can be married. I have—but you seem just ready to let everything drop. Do you want an excuse to break our engagement—?"

"For God's sake, Elsie, don't talk like that!" exclaimed Dudley. "I love you with all my heart—you know that—but this thing's an experiment—it may not work out as we expect—and I've got to live; I can't just throw away my ranch—"

"*Rent* your ranch; that's easy enough, with people crazy to pay any price for a foot or two of water-front. I don't see anything very difficult about that; a man has to take *some* risks, no matter what business he goes into. But if you say so, I'll go round and take back all I've said—only—"

Dudley hastened to reassure her, and feigned a zeal he was far from feeling.

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"There's this about it," he said, "if the thing fails you've got to skip the country with me. We've got five hundred dollars—the man said I should blow it in."

"We're not going to fail; and the best thing you can do is to put that money in the bank where you won't be tempted."

Dudley, however, kept the money by him; he wished to hand the roll back to the owner, intact. As his mind and hands became engaged in the business so strangely undertaken, he became genuinely interested; there were undoubted possibilities in it which, pushed to success, meant the consummation of his dearest hopes. The prize was well worth striving for; he could but try—failure would leave him no worse off than before. If he should win out—but he did not allow himself to become sanguine upon that head.

The summer passed all too quickly, for although the feather industry prospered it was not without disappointments and drawbacks. For one thing, Mrs. Whitney, at first favorably inclined toward their project, positively refused to listen to establishing a camp with her daughter after one breezy night spent in the vicinity of Dudley's 'plant.' Moreover, she intimated her disapproval of a young man who turned his back upon a good ranch of his own, or an honest trade, to fritter away time over hare-brained experiments. So Indian Joe cured the feathers under Dudley's direction, while Elsie listened rebel-

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liously to caustic criticisms of her lover, instead of toiling joyfully at his side.

When prospects began to be really promising, the weather took a hand in the game. It rained—it kept on raining; the dry feathers became damp and threatened to mould. Neither Dudley nor Joe knew what to do with them, even if they had possessed proper facilities for handling them.

This threatened calamity proved a blessing, for it reduced Mama to the relenting stage, prompting her to suggest her garret and a laundry stove, and this offer quelled the mutiny in Elsie's heart.

How they worked, those two—and they saved the crop! They filled the ticks, too, and piled them high all around the garret walls. When Dudley was escorted up the stairs, and saw that, thanks to their aid, he really had 'made good,' he marched boldly up to Mama and gave her a resounding kiss, which she gracefully accepted.

When the fall returns were all in the only shadow over the whole undertaking was the stranger's failure to return. Disasters there had been on land and sea, but Dudley rested in the conviction that the man had been murdered for his money by the two men who had shadowed him. Elsie was opposed to using his money, so it was determined to deposit the bills in the bank to await his possible return. When Dudley presented them the cashier sorted them carefully in little piles, counted them, looked dubi-

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ously at Dudley, then shoved them back through the wicket.

“Can’t take those,” he said.

“Why not?” demanded Dudley.

“Counterfeit!” was the reply. It solved the mystery.

Northbound By Night

BY

GORDON HOUGHTON

Northbound By Night

NIGHT had shut down cold, damp and dark on the little railroad town of Red Bluffs. With the exception of a few flaring, spluttering arc-lights at occasional street crossings and the twinkling lanterns of the switchmen, no lights were visible in the freight yards. Up and down on either side of the main track long rows of box-cars, gondolas, and oil-tanks loomed black and shadowy.

The door of one of the box-cars slid back creakingly, and a man, after peering cautiously around, dropped noiselessly to the ground. The man was Jimmy Lamonte, professional tramp, more generally known as "Denver Jimmy." Judging from his appearance Jimmy was a very ordinary sort of tramp. His oil-besmeared dark suit and black shirt covered a short, thick-set body which, though deft in all its movements, yet gave a decided impression of awkwardness; he wore his battered slouch hat cocked aggressively forward and to one side, so that it concealed his only good feature—a pair of large, clear gray eyes; for the rest, his face was habitually adorned with a growth of black stubble, which, combined with the coal dust, oil and soot

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of the road, gave him a villainous aspect. In manner he was cheerful from habit and necessity, but there was often an expression of weariness and melancholy in his eyes, which belied his ribald tongue and coarse laugh.

On the present occasion, after muttering a few oaths anent the coldness of the night and the excellence of his late sleeping accommodations, he made the best of his way, quietly and unobtrusively, out of the freight yards, and towards that haven of refuge for the homeless hobo—the nearest saloon. He entered by the rear door, and, after a hasty glance around at the patrons and bar-tender to ascertain whether or not the latter was likely to eject him on sight, took a chair, drew it up close to the almost red-hot air-tight, and dropped comfortably to sleep.

Some hours later he was aroused from his slumber by three short, sharp toots from a locomotive. No matter how soundly he was sleeping, habit had taught him to wake at that sound. He woke now with a start, and looked about him nervously. The saloon was quiet. Over in one corner a group of negroes were playing poker in an indolent, sleepy sort of fashion; the bartender was industriously polishing his glasses, and an Italian janitor was sprinkling wet paper, and sweeping up the cigar stubs and mud-begrimed cards which were scattered over the floor around the gambling tables. Jimmy glanced at the clock and mumbled to himself, "1:10—must be the north-bound—the Red Ball freight. It's —— cold but I reckon I'd better

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make her out." He yawned, stretched himself, put on a pair of coarse gloves much the worse for wear, and sidled toward the door. As he passed the bartender, the latter smiled, and said: "Traveling, partner?" Jimmy returned his smile, and answered with equal brevity, "Yep—north," then, passing through the swing doors, he disappeared into the night towards the yards.

When he arrived there, there were several freight trains standing "made up," apparently ready to leave. Jimmy hurried from one train to another, rapidly examining the way-bills by the fitful glimmer of the arc-lights, till he found the one he wanted; then he ran rapidly up and down the long line of cars, feeling each side door hasp for the leaden seal whose presence or absence showed whether the car was loaded or a "deadhead." A careful search failed to reveal a single deadhead in the thirty or more cars. Jimmy swore softly, and soliloquized, "I reckon its the rods for me tonight, and its cold as —, too." By this time the chill of the fog had penetrated his scanty clothing, and his teeth were chattering pitifully. With slow and dejected steps he moved forward, toward the locomotive, for in order to "beat it out" on the rods successfully he would have to get ahead of the train and "make it on the fly," when it had passed the lights of the station.

He avoided walking in full view of the station by making a detour back of the roundhouse. As he stole quietly along he passed a row of silent cottages. A light shone invitingly through

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the window of one of them. As Jimmy came opposite the door swung open, and a man dressed in the overalls, jumper and cap of a railroad engineer stood silhouetted against the warm light within, his profile showing clear-cut and distinct. The vagrant stopped and looked enviously at the cozy, comfortable-looking interior. He looked at the man and inwardly cursed him for what he called his luck. Why should not *he*, too, be living as comfortably as that other? He heard another warning blast of the whistle, and was about to resume his way when a woman appeared beside the man. The light from within shone full on her face. It was a strong, calm, beautiful face, and there was such a look of love and trust in it as she turned toward the man that Jimmy, the renegade, the criminal, who scarce knew what love meant, felt unconsciously awed, and looked away, bowing his head almost reverently. Somewhere in his inner soul a chord had been touched which had never thrilled before. Vaguely he heard a woman's voice call "Good-bye, Harry;" vaguely he heard a door close and a man's footsteps running lightly on the board walk. Jimmy felt in a dream, but the mood quickly passed, and again he thought of the other man as a natural enemy, more fortunate than he.

He hurried to the water tank, in the shadow of which he could conceal himself to await the train. He had not long to wait. A final blast of the whistle was followed by the slow clanging of the bell, and in another moment the

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engine thundered by, belching great clouds of steam from the cylinder-cocks on either side. Jimmy's every faculty was now strained to the uttermost. When the locomotive had passed him he sprang close to the rapidly moving cars. He looked beneath each to find one suited to his purpose; some had but two rods, while others had the rods close to the body of the car; finally he saw one with six rods, hung low, and with the cast-iron struts wide apart. He braced himself, caught the handle of the car door, and, as he was swept from his feet, swung down and in, and shot far under the car over the rods. In a moment more he was reclining at full-length on one of them, one foot extended to the next rod to steady him, and one arm tightly clutching the strut.

As the miles rolled by, he drowsed fitfully, waking with his hands grasping the ice-cold iron in a grip so tense that he could hardly relax it to change his position. Occasionally on the level stretches and down grades, he was pounded by an incessant hail of gravel and clinkers, which cut and bruised him painfully. Toward morning the cold became so intense that sleep was no longer possible. He was so benumbed and fatigued that he only managed to cling to the rods by sheer force of will.

All at once, without warning, the brake-shoes ground upon the wheels, checking the cars so suddenly that Jimmy almost lost his balance; he recovered himself with an oath, and sat up on the rods expectantly. In another moment an

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ominous crash sounded from the front; there was a sound of crunching timbers and parting bolts; Jimmy's car reared like a plunging horse, and then fell over on its side. Jimmy was thrown violently to the ground, and picked himself up, half stunned, but otherwise unhurt, from among the debris of the cars.

For a few moments he staggered uncertainly about, gathering his scattered wits, then prompted by instincts of curiosity, he went forward toward the engine. The wreck was piled high, a tangled mass of twisted iron and splintered wood, and was beginning to take fire—indeed, around the engine it was already burning fiercely. The cause of the wreck was soon apparent. Ahead of the shattered engine were the remains of several heavy gondola-cars such as are used for shipping commercial iron. These had been standing on a blind siding, when the freight train ran through the open switch—on to the siding—and into the cars. The engineer had noticed the automatic switch-signal which indicated that it was open, a few moments too late.

Jimmy watched the steadily-increasing blaze with interest. The flames were creeping slowly, but steadily, from one car to another; here great tongues of flame leaped high into the air; there they licked eagerly round the stout timbers of the car frames, consuming them more rapidly as the heat grew more intense. Jimmy drew nearer to the engine itself. The fire had not yet reached it, though the flames were approaching rapidly; but it was enveloped in a great cloud

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of white steam, which was escaping with a steady roar from some ruptured flue or water tube. A gust from the furious draft of the fire scattered the steam-cloud for a moment, and, through the vista thus framed, Jimmy saw a face. He recognized it instantly. It was the same which he had viewed but a few hours before with sensations of envy. The engineer lay, now, with only the upper part of his body visible, pinned to the ground by the projecting cab-roof of his locomotive. No human cry could have been heard through the awful roar of the conflagration, but Jimmy saw the instantaneous look of supplication that flashed into the man's eyes. Despite this the tramp's mental attitude was very little changed—the other fellow's luck had turned, that was all. In the course of his short but eventful life he had seen many men die, some peacefully at home, some violently and suddenly, with their boots on. Why should he trouble himself to help this particular man, still less risk his life for him?

Suddenly he started; clear and distinct across his memory flashed the image of a woman's face. Again he saw the soft, warm light shining through the open doorway; again he saw the engineer's figure, standing black against the bright interior; again he saw the lovelight in the woman's eyes as she turned to bid him good-bye. Should she wait in vain for the return of the man she loved, when he could save him? He forgot himself, the danger, the heat, in his new all-absorbing purpose.

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Without the least hesitation he wrenched a two-by-four from the wreckage and rushed through the blinding, scalding steam to the spot where the engineer lay. Using it as a crow-bar, he lifted the shattered framework of the cab, and attempted to drag the now unconscious man from beneath the ruin. He worked with feverish haste, for no man could long endure the fearful heat; the moments seemed like hours, and still he struggled ineffectually; at last he put forth an almost superhuman effort, put his shoulder under the lever to sustain the weight of the cab, and dragged the man out. Exhausted from his labor and faint from the choking heat, he relaxed his hold and permitted the framework to settle back with a crash. As it fell, a loose timber flew up and struck him full across the head. He staggered for a moment, dazed by the blow, then summoning his last remaining strength, he half carried, half dragged the other to a place of comparative safety. The strain was over, and he fell unconscious to the ground.

Some hours later a wrecking crew from Dunsuir found the two, lying within a few feet of each other near the track, some little distance from the charred and smoldering remains of the wreck. The railroad surgeon looked at them both. He paused but a moment over Jimmy. "Dead" he said, briefly, "concussion and probably hemorrhage of the brain." He gave the engineer a more careful examination, and found that though severely injured he would probably

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live. He spoke a few words to the awed railroad men standing around, and they carried the injured man to the caboose of the wrecking train.

The engineer recovered, but nobody ever guessed the hand that "Denver Jimmy" had had in his rescue. The press mentioned a tramp "accidentally killed while stealing a ride on the cars."



Under the Flatiron

A Story of the Snake River

BY

FLORA HUNTLEY

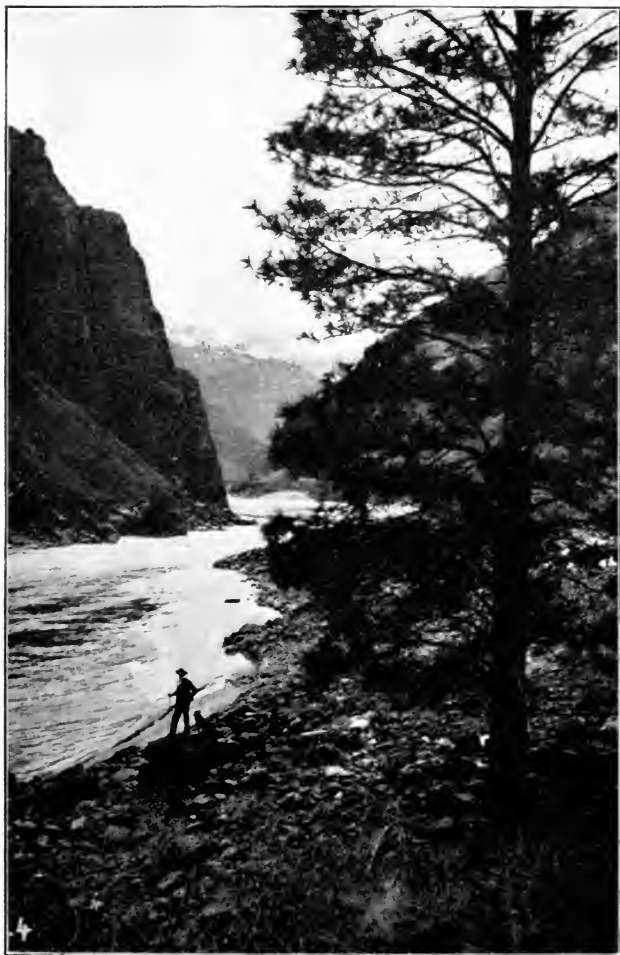


Photo by A. O. Huntley.

"Like a writhing serpent trailed the Yellow Snake."

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T was the hot canyon of the Snake River. Above rose the bare, scorched mountains in the late August sun; between them, like a writhing serpent, trailed the Yellow Snake. On a bar of land bordering the stream stood a solitary cabin, and just within its shadow a girl, so utterly incongruous with her primitive surroundings, that she seemed an unreal vision. Laura Curtis, in her fresh pink dimity, would have graced a five o'clock tea. So little, and sweet, and dainty, she stood there, so timid and appealing, one longed to catch her up like a child and kiss her.

She lifted her head and sniffed the still air for a breath of coolness, as she watched the evening shadows stretch across the river and climb the peaks beyond. Their rude curves repelled yet fascinated her, as her gaze followed the outline of a colossal flatiron traced against the cloudless sky. She shrank from its impending heat and put up her hand to shut out the spectacle. Her eyes searched the wild trail on the hills below, and her heart leaped at sight of a rider, then sank at thought of the meeting. How could she withstand his pleading!

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She moved across the dry grass to a little clump of alder bushes and parted the branches. Beside a tiny stream that trickled slowly from a spring above, stood a rude wooden cradle, covered with musquito-netting and protected by a wagon-sheet. Beside it sat Laura Curtis' sister. There were the same features, the same coloring; but an infinite difference made itself felt. Young Mrs. Bennett, in two years, had incorporated herself into the landscape and become a part of the picture. Laura, for three months, had held herself away from it, and struggled to preserve her own identity. Unlike the chameleon, she felt that her protection lay in her contrast to the life about her.

"Harry is coming with the mail," said Laura.

"How near is he?"

"A half-mile."

"I wish you wouldn't go back home, Laura," began her sister, with seeming irrelevance. There was a home-sick note in her voice. "Harry Wescott is a good man; he'll be a rich man some day, when the mines open. Not that the money matters so much—but he's our kind, Laura; a man of fine feeling, and still a strong, human, natural man. When a fellow leaves college for the woods or the mountains, it means an appreciation of the better things of life. Why can't you like him?"

"I like him very much."

"You know what I mean, dear. It would mean everything to me to have you here, near me. You know how happy I am with Frank

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and the baby, and yet—one's own sister, and our mother dead—"

"Don't, Hattie," said the girl, beseechingly. "I should die; I don't see how you endure it."

"You wouldn't feel so if it were your home, if those you love were here."

"My home? My prison! my tomb!" thought the girl, as she looked up at the mountains which shut her in. "It isn't the isolation—it's just the horror of the place. I can not breathe here; I should suffocate."

"If you only cared for him," persisted the wife, "it would all be so simple."

Laura opened her lips to speak. It would be a relief to confess it all and own the love she had denied. But only a sigh escaped her. Her silence was her safety. The loyalty of her sister for young Wescott was something to battle against. Not even to herself must she admit her love, much less allow it to be discovered. She would be misunderstood and misjudged. She would seem selfish and unreasonable, and would be urged to believe that she would grow to like the valley. But the absence of love itself—this was an argument not to be gainsaid. It left her sister weaponless.

The girl stood silent, thinking, listening.

Hattie rose, impulsively, and put her arm about the little pink figure. "You look so—lonesome, dear, one always feels like coming to your rescue, somehow," she said, as they moved toward the cabin at sound of the horses' feet.

Wescott tossed Mrs. Bennett the improvised

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mail-sack, then reached a bunch of flowers to Laura as he swung down from the saddle. It was the sweet mountain laurel, with purple wild asters, and he had added a handful of grasses. This was the touch that appealed to her—that he had known to add the grasses!

“Oh, thank you!”

She looked up into his brown, handsome, joyous face. The hat pushed back showed a fine white brow, and the low Byron collar of his black silk shirt revealed the muscles of an athlete. He had a clean look despite his dusty ride.

The spurs at his feet rattled as he stepped nearer and drew something from the pocket beneath his chaparejos. He opened his hand and disclosed a huge rattle, the largest she had ever seen.

“Mercy! I don’t want it!” She put her hands behind her and backed away.

“I thought you might like to take it home, since you insist on going,” he laughed skeptically. “I wanted to get the skin, but I bruised the snake in killing it.”

She shuddered and ran to the cabin, where she watched him unsaddle the horse and slip off the bridle. She spread a lunch while he washed and Mrs. Bennett read snatches from the paper while he ate.

“Where’s Frank?” he inquired presently.

“He’s milking. The cows didn’t come home and he had to hunt them, so he’s late,” said Mrs. Bennett, as she laid aside the paper and made her way to the little camp among the alders.

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"Shall we walk down to the river?" suggested Wescott, rising.

"I don't want to see it," cried Laura, "it's so cruel and treacherous. I can think of nothing but the boy who was drowned."

"You're nervous over it, Laura. It's really one of the most picturesque streams that I have ever seen. Now the view from the point above here—let me show you —"

"Not to-night." She shrank from the dry, rustling grass, the rocks and the sand.

"We'll look at the mountains, if you like them better," and he brought out the rude chairs, with their hairy, cow-hide seats, and placed them beyond the little garden patch, facing the Flatiron, where they could watch the moon rise over its rim.

"I'm not over fond of the Flatiron, either," she said, half seriously.

"Case of Devil and deep sea, is it?"

"Two Devils, and both pushing me into the treacherous Snake, which is more horrible than the deepest sea. Look at the Flatiron! Isn't it hot and relentless! I can just imagine how it would siss if I touched a wet finger to it. I often fancy it ironing its way over this valley and smoothing out all the wrinkles."

He laughed at her fancy and abruptly changed the subject.

"The McDougal mine was sold today for two hundred thousand."

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

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"Are you?" he cried, eagerly. "Mine are every bit as good, and when I get my price, you'll see what I'll do."

"You'll leave the Snake River?" she questioned, not daring to hope it.

"I couldn't do that—not for some time at least—and I shouldn't want to; it's home to me." He drew the picture. "When the wind sweeps over the hills, it's warm and sheltered here. The snow creeps down the mountains but stops before it reaches us. I like to think of the New England snow storms and the Dakota blizzards, as I pick the early February flowers. It's all so snug and cozy—a little happy-valley, where one can live content and feel the very smile of heaven."

The girl listened absently to his strange infatuation.

"And when the railroad comes down the river—I'm in no hurry for it—" he added parenthetically, "we won't seem so far away from the world; the country will be opened up —"

"It will never be opened."

"Why not, you little skeptic?"

"The Peacock mine was opened in 1863, and what has been done with it? The mines at Cuprum ten years ago, and they are deserted; your railroad has been surveyed a dozen times, and always with a boom, but it will never come. Nobody would live here."

"Do you really dislike it so?" he asked, surprised at her familiarity with pioneer history.



"Above rose the bare scorched mountains."

Photo by A. O. Huntley.

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"I've seen more attractive places," she answered evasively.

"You're homesick," he taunted. "After a visit to the East you'll long for this wild, free life."

"Listen," she said, resolving to be finally understood. "It's neither the East nor the West; it's the earth, the soil; I never could take root in it. It's that horrible wall of rock, rising into the air. It's all a tragedy of nature, when some mighty convulsion left this awful havoc, and we are caught in its ruins."

"What a tragic little girl it is," he said, refusing to be serious. "There! see the moon over the mountains. Isn't it beautiful, away from the busy world, and close to the great earth! Do you know, I never care to see the moon in the city. It seems out of harmony; but this is perfect."

They sat in silence, watching the increasing segment till it rose a completed circle.

"There!" exclaimed Wescott, with boyish delight, "now let's do it over again."

"You mean —?"

"I'll show you."

He caught her hand and led her forward, stumbling over the dusty uneven ground. They stopped beside a mass of huge boulders, grouped in rude resemblance to a human dwelling—"the play-house"—they had christened it. Here they were again within the shadow of the mountain and the moon was lost behind the rising ridge.

They stood motionless, speechless, before the familiar spectacle, but to the girl it was as if

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the moon had never risen before, and would not appear again in all eternity. Fascinated, she watched it grow, and felt that with its completed disk, her tragedy would be upon her.

The night was pregnant; its details etched themselves into her soul. A squirrel rustled the dry leaves and disappeared in the rocks; a wandering bat flapped against her hair; and a line from Omar whispered itself over and over.

“How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same garden—and for one in
vain!”

She shivered and strangled a sob in her throat. The touch of the rustling grass rasped against her hand; she longed to nestle it in the strong clasp of his, but she moved away, and leaned for support against the wall of rock. Startled, she drew back at the hot touch kept from the day's sun. A dwarfed pine caught her little fluttering sleeve and fastened it with pitch.

Tears came to her eyes. Why was nature so cruel here! At every touch it scorched and stung and frightened her; and he was so near! His eyes were on the sky, but his hand reached, asking for hers.

The lower arc suddenly darted above the rim of the mountain and the moon was full! A breath of relief escaped her as their eyes met.

“It seems like turning back the wheels of Time,” he said.

“Would you care to?” she questioned.

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"I'd live these months since you came to the river, a hundred times over." His voice was very tender. "Would you?"

"I wouldn't live them again—not once—for all the world!"

"Do you mean it, Laura?" He came nearer. "Do you know, I was going to ask you tonight, to live here—to stay with me, always. Do you mean that it could never be? Have you taken this way to tell me?"

She trembled, but her voice was clear. "It could never be."

"Are you sure, Laura? Oh, are you very sure? This is a question between us. You're not thinking of the country—it isn't that? Can't you tell me? There is some one else?"

"Don't, Hal," she besought him. She felt that she still had strength to put him out of her life, she still possessed herself; but a word spoken, the touch of his hand, a kiss to be remembered—and there would be a claim on her soul beyond her power to forget. "Don't let us talk of it. I can not."

"You can not mean it, Laura!" It was a wounded cry, and he clutched her arm to keep her. "It is not true."

She repulsed him rudely. "I am going back."

He shrank at the changed tone, and the light in his eyes went out. His face had an unnatural seriousness that made it dull. The girl was thankful for this apathy; it was less hard to witness than his pain.

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Hurt by the gesture, and stung at the quiet, decisive voice, he walked silently beside her to the spot where they had watched the first moonrise. Without a word he left her to go for his horse.

"I can bear it, oh, I can bear it," she moaned, clasping her hands. "I can live without love, but I can not put love to this awful test. I know my weakness and my little strength."

It was a prayer; it was a struggle for life; it was the assertion of a prenatal influence, intensifying itself in this crisis of her soul. The instinctive, unreasoning fear of animal life; the shrinking from Nature in her crude and violent forms, was a mortal antipathy, which her pioneer mother alone had understood.

Wescott stopped beside Laura for his final good-bye.

"I shall not see you again," he said. "There are two or three weeks of assessment work to be done on the mines, and I think I'll go up and begin it tomorrow. You will be gone before I come back."

"Yes," she said, holding her beating heart, and pausing for breath to speak evenly, "I shall be gone."

"Sit down, Laura," he said, seeing her agitation. "You are tired; I have made it hard for you." He threw the bridle rein over the horse's head to the ground and walked back.

She sank into her chair.

"I think you know, Laura, how love changes all the world. This valley will be less beautiful

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to me, because you have gone. You have made it wonderful. Everything will speak to me of you. I hoped to interpret it, transform it for you. If after a time, when you are away from it all, you feel different, I want you to tell me, to come back to me. Will you?"

She did not speak. Her hand toyed nervously with her chair, and reached to the dried grass, but her fingers touched the cold, damp folds of a snake, coiled at her side.

The cry was frozen on her lips by the quick, unmistakable rattle. All the horror of the wild life about her seemed concentrated into this loathsome thing waiting to dart its poison into her life, and her reserve melted into a sickening, helpless terror.

"Harry," she sobbed, and clung quivering to his arm.

It was a call to his very soul, thrilling him with its subtle appeal; but he put her away to crush the reptile with his heel, pausing an instant to make sure that it was dead.

The girl stood terrified and alone, not daring to move. He took her unresisting into his arms. Faint and weak with fright and her long self-control, she yielded utterly to his embrace.

"Laura!" he implored, as if to convince himself as well as her, "it is I—you love me, Laura! There is no one else!"

Her little hand tightened over the hard muscle of his arm and moved convulsively to his face; her wet lashes touched his cheek; her lips moved against his throat.

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“Laura!” he gasped, holding her away from him almost roughly, and turning her face up to the light. “Laura, I understand, I see how you suffer. You shall not stay here another day, if I may go with you, back to the world—anywhere, so that we go together.”

A light suddenly gleamed in the cabin, and a low lullaby came on the still air.

“It would be death, here,” she said, “but I am ready to die—with you.”

“You shall live with me!” and he drew her home to his heart.

The Chief's Counterplot

BY

EDITH ALLEN JORDAN

The Chief's Counterplot

THE chief's big feet shuffled uneasily under the desk. He was scowling abominably. "Dang it, Bobbie! I won't touch it," he said. "There's no use sending it here. I know the type. You needn't tell me anything about it. I tell you that girl can't write stories!"

"But if you *could* find time just to look it over."

"It isn't the time. I've all the time there is. Take it to Smith."

"You are so much more just than Smith," persisted Bobbie. "Besides she knows Smith, and has an intense dislike for him."

"What's that to do with it? I'll be hanged if I want her to love me! Nice mess, if every woman who wrote fell in love with the editor! Tell her to send it to *The Argus*."

"She can't wait so long. The truth is—though she doesn't say so—I—I—think she's up against it."

A sharp glance shot from under the heavy eyebrows of the chief.

"So? What's the matter with her?"

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"She's been having a beast of a time. Her mother was sick all winter, and died a couple of weeks ago. They lost their home—had no end of trouble. I don't suppose her salary went very far, and school's out now."

"Any family?" queried the chief.

"One brother. Bright little chap, but delicate. She's awfully good to him. I told her I thought she could sell anything she would write. She's very clever."

"Humph! That's no sign she can write. Good-looking, too, I suppose."

Bobbie flushed. He suspected he was being quizzed; but he was the chief's favorite. He knew anyone else would have been squelched long ago, so he rose to it manfully.

"Yes, she is good-looking. I think she's beautiful."

Another glance from the keen eyes, as the chief paused in the work he was continuing, notwithstanding the argument.

"Why don't you help her, instead of putting her up to this sort of thing?"

Bobbie was off guard.

"Help her! I'd die—I'd do anything for her," excitedly. "She won't let me help her. She's so confoundedly independent. She would never bring her story here if she thought you hesitated about it."

"Bring it! Great guns! Don't let her bring it! Send it, man, if you must—but don't let her bring it!"

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Mischief wrinkled the corners of Bobbie's mouth for a second. He knew the chief's weakness.

The cause was half won. Now for the other half. He took a long jump.

"If you don't mind, chief, she would like to read it to you. She has read it to me. It is full of human interest. Could she come at two, do you think?"

He gasped a bit. Had he overstepped?

The blue pencil slammed on the desk. The broad back straightened. The gray eyes shot fire.

Not a trace of impudence was lurking in the innocence of Bobbie's rosy face.

"Dang it! I don't care when she comes!"

"Thank you, sir."

Bobbie was gone, but the chief was sputtering.

At precisely half a second before two, the young woman under discussion entered the chief's private office.

A grunt of satisfaction curled over in the chief's throat after the moment of mutual inspection. Then his big hand went out.

She smiled, and the chief was won.

"I knew your mother. You are like her," he said, and wished he had kept still.

In the next thought he wondered if there had really been a look of pain in her face or if his eyes were growing old.

She was quite composed, quite dignified—not at all afraid, as girls were apt to be when they

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came to that office, and she went straight at her mission, which he liked.

"No tomfoolery!" he thought, shoving his papers aside.

"You are very kind. I know how busy you are," she remarked, opening her manuscript. "I have cut it quite short. Mr. Hartrett thought it long in places."

"Humph! How many words?" he asked, gruffly.

"Just four thousand. I inserted some extra words to make it even."

The chief spoke hastily. "What's your title?"

"Root-bound."

"Good title. Where did you get it?"

"Well, you see, I began this story when we first came West. Our neighbors were so very homesick."

"Of course. Weren't you?"

"My mother would not allow us to think so," she answered, very quietly. "I realize, now, how brave she was."

"Women are, sometimes," under his breath. "Read your story."

He listened until she had finished, enjoying the well-modulated voice, vastly more than the account of a homesick old lady who had come West to live—told simply, but with a creaking of machinery that jarred the chief's nerves.

"What's your motive?" he asked abruptly.

She colored. "I desired employment during my vacation."

The Chief's Counterplot

He coughed. "I don't mean that. What's the *motif* of your story—your theme? What are you driving at?"

"O, I did not understand you. I believe I had several aims in my mind. I wished to show the Western people how they could help those who came from the East to become contented—and the Eastern women how to help themselves. Then I wanted to tell how lovely those young people were to their grandmother. O, yes—and I wanted to show how the beauties of nature could assist one in being happy. I must have had four motives."

"Humph!" restlessly. "Too much motive. Have one, and stick to it. Make it strong. Too much narrative. Not enough action. Make the old lady do something."

"Why, Mr. Sterling, she did all the housework, and made a home for those young people. Surely that was enough for one woman to do. An old lady, too."

A chuckle came from the chief.

"Plenty, plenty! I like your style."

The girl blushed. Bobbie had said he was a gentleman. Were all editors like this?

"I am in mourning, because of my mother's death," she replied, with dignity. The editor was surprised at his own embarrassment.

"I referred to your literary style. Where's your climax?"

"My climax? Why, O—I think it must have been when they reached Mount Rainier. No, it was when she came home from the picnic, Sun-

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day evening. She did not want to go, you know."

"Naturally—from New England—and on Sunday, too. She should not have gone."

"But, you see, the old lady, who was our neighbor, really did go."

"No matter! Don't let her do it again!"

The girl's eyes sparkled with fun. The chief forgot what he meant to say in noticing the laugh, and how it brightened even her black gown.

"There is no danger of her doing it again, for she has gone back East," she answered.

"Where she belonged," emphatically. "Ought to have stayed there in the first place. How much time have you put on this?"

"Not long enough, I am afraid," she spoke doubtfully. "I worked at it, off and on, during several months, some time ago. Then, recently, when I had read it to Bobbie—to Mr. Hartrett, I changed it some."

"Fine fellow, Hartrett. Known him long?"

"Yes, indeed. All my life. I do not know what we should have done, last winter, without him."

The chief's shaggy head nodded. His alert eyes had seen, and the quick mind interpreted, all that was necessary. He strode down the room, then back to his desk.

"I'll give you a hundred for it. We pay on acceptance. Publish when we get ready."

"Oh," she gasped. "Oh!"

He hoped she wasn't going to faint, and wished Bobbie were there.

The Chief's Counterplot

"Oh, Mr. Sterling, do you mean you will buy my story? That it is worth a hundred dollars?"

The chief cleared his throat. He was hedging for time.

"That's all I can allow for it. Better bring everything you write to me. Am very busy. If you see Bobbie, send him here, if you please. Good afternoon."

Bobbie came. There was no question in the chief's mind about his having seen the lady. The young man's usually ruddy face was quite pale. He wanted to shake hands but the chief would not see it.

"Turned in that political stuff?" he asked brusquely.

"Yes, sir." Bobbie's work was always on time. "But I—I will just have to thank you, sir—she was so happy, she—cried. She said it would clear her up in great shape." He hesitated, with a lump in his throat. "And if you please, Mr. Sterling, I will be responsible for that hundred dollars, myself. I—she—can you use the story at all, sir?"

The chief turned on him.

"You scoundrel! It's in that basket! That's what I bought it for. Save postage. I told you she couldn't write. Knew it all along. Wrong makeup. Made to boss a cook, and to sew on buttons. Any woman can peg at story-writing. Only one in a thousand can make a home. Why don't you marry her?"

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"I want to, and she won't. She says she won't marry till little Dick is well, and we are ready to go to housekeeping."

"That's nothing, you booby! Be more convincing! You are as bad as her yarn—nothing doing—not enough action—wrong suspense—concentrate your forces—get a move on you! Do you hear? *Bring things to a climax!*" The chief was growing excited.

"I'd be the happiest man on earth, if I could," soberly spoke Bobbie.

"Well, do it! Marry her now—this afternoon—both of 'em! Take 'em to my house. Need's a woman around. She can look after Williams. Housekeeper been gone for a month. Do as you please about going yourself. But—*somebody's got—to—marry—that—girl!* Dang it Bobbie! If you don't, *I will!* Are you convinced? If she isn't there to pour my coffee to-night, you lose your job! I mean it! D'ye hear? Now act!"

As the door slammed behind the delighted Bobbie, the chief wiped his spectacles.

"I'm an old fool! Got even with Bobbie, though!"

A
*Matrimonial Epidemic
at Skookum*

BY
F. RONEY WEIR

Author of
"A Romany of Rabbit Run",
"The Hired Man", Etc.

A Matrimonial Epidemic at Skookum

DOC. WARREN swears it was his plan, but it wasn't; it was mine from the very outset.

Doc. was up in the Skookum Country to buy my wares, Siwash blankets, baskets, mats, cougar skins, elks' teeth. I was rather a poor farmer, and eked out my income by gathering such interesting and ill-smelling curios as came my way during my intercourse with the natives.

There were four of us ranchers whose claims joined; Jones, a raw-boned Missourian, Ole Helgeson, from the land of the Sagas, and Albert, a Canadian of French descent, who let his hair and whiskers grow until, if we wanted to communicate with him, we had to fire a rifle to attract his attention and get him out of the brush, and myself.

Said I, "Doc., we're all good fellows, and if this railroad goes through, as we expect it will, we shall all be rich within the next ten years. We are all able to support wives in good shape even now if we had 'em, but there are no women

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out here except a kloochman or two, and we've been stowed away in the woods here so long not one of us dares make a break into the world after a wife. Now you are going to Chicago with goods, and coming right back. A big city like Chicago must be full of women sort of old, or homely, or over-worked, who would jump at the chance to come out to live on a Washington ranch, and marry a man who stood a chance of being rich as soon as the country opens up, and the railroad gets in."

"I presume I could find four women of that description down there," said Doc., "but the trouble is if I should find 'em and send 'em out, you wouldn't like the brand, and I'd have 'em all on my hands. Of course, being a widower, I could provide for one of 'em, but what would become of the other three?"



"Aye tak von, by yingo!" promised Ole Helgeson.

"I, too," promised Albert.

"I want a good-looker, and young!" said Jones, and we gave him the laugh, for I suppose the Lord never made but one homlier man than Jones, and for personal reasons I rather not mention the name of that other man.

Well, before Doc. started we all promised that if he would do the best he could we'd stand by, no matter what he handed out to us; and he

A Matrimonial Epidemic at Skookum

left for Chicago with that understanding, and a cargo of Siwash handiwork.

After Doc. was gone, and the die cast, we began to feel pretty serious about what we had done. We used to get together nights in one cabin or the other, to talk the matter over. We were full of suggestions as to improvements in each other's personal appearance, and surroundings.

We made a bee and gave Albert a hair-cut and a shave, and after that we used to start every time we met him unexpectedly, thinking him a stranger.

Every man jack of us did some extra stunt to make our cabins more attractive. Jones painted his door sky-blue; Ole cut a window in his cabin (he had never felt the necessity of a window before); I tapestried my walls with Indian blankets, and Albert winged the dust from the top of his stovepipe.

At last we got a letter from Doc. "I've rounded up the four," he wrote, "I don't know as they will be at all satisfactory, but it is the best I can do. One is young and pretty, one not so young, nor so pretty, but full of fun and mighty stylish; one is a Swede girl who will never be hung for her beauty, and the fourth is a widow with a bad eye and encumbrances."

"Aye tank aye don't tak dat cucumbrances," said Ole, "Aye tank aye lak dat Svede gal pooty vell."

"You'll take just whatever you happen to draw out of the hat!" Jones assured him.

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"I think," said I, "that Doc. has made an awful mistake. At least he should have evened up the bunch. From 'one who is young and pretty' to a widow with a bad eye and encumbrances, is a fearful latitude. I hope the matter won't breed quarrels between us."

I could see that Jones had his mind set on the young and pretty one; and Ole kept saying, "Aye lak dat Svede gal pooty vell," which narrowed Albert's choice and mine down to the stylish one, and the widow with the bad eye.

Then Albert made his declaration of independence by stating that he had but one pet aversion in the world, and that was widows, so you see where I stood.

The nearer the time came for our cargo to arrive, the shakier we got. It began to be pretty clear to me that both Albert and Jones were just on the point of taking to the tall timber, and leaving Doc. and the rest of us in a pretty mess. Something had to be done.

I said: "Boys, it's a good week before they can get here, what do you say to all going down to Skookum and bowling up for the last time?"

None of us were drinking men, but they all grasped at the idea.

Albert told me confidentially that whenever he thought of that "stylish one" looking him over, and making remarks about his clothes, he felt that he must make a run for safety while yet there was time.

A Matrimonial Epidemic at Skookum

Even Ole began to weaken. He kept saying, "Aye tank ve pooty big fools! Ve gat 'long on ranch a' right mitout dem cucumbrances!"

I, myself, didn't have much faith in the goods Doc. was sending out. If he had considered them fair to middling why didn't he come along back with them according to agreement? But I wasn't going back on the arrangement at this late day, and what was more, I didn't intend that the boys should.

I had told the boys that it would be a week before the shipment from Chicago could arrive, but in reality I knew that they were due at Skookum then.

Not being in the habit of drinking, it didn't take the boys any time to get into a condition where they wouldn't have been afraid to face a drove of ichthyosauruses.

The only trouble was that in getting the boys fixed up I became so uncertain in my movements that if Ole Helgeson hadn't hitched on to me and hauled me round I'd have been mislaid in some odd corner and forgotten entirely. My legs felt just like two strings of boiled macaroni.

From that time on, until we got the whole consignment out to the ranches, there is just a hazy glimmer in my mind, like looking into a broken kaleidoscope. I remember dimly of standing up in a row to be married. Somebody had his arms around me, supporting the weight of my body, which my macaroni legs refused, and I took it for granted that the person who was supporting me was the one to whom I was being

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married. When I discovered that it was still Ole, I was troubled. I liked Ole as a neighbor and friend, but I didn't care to be joined to him in the holy bonds of matrimony.

Opposite us stood a group of women, some young, some old.

After the ceremony we hired a team and a big wagon with a shingle-rack, and all went home together. Ole Helgeson drove. He was the only one in the crowd who had kept up his practice in the gentle art of boozing, so he was not quite so incapacitated as were the rest of us.

It seemed to me as I looked over the load, that there were a great many more of us than there should have been. There was one old party with a heavy dewlap under her chin, and a sunken mouth, who kept looking reprovingly at me with her little, aged, watery eyes until it dawned on my bedimmed brain that she must be my wife.



It made me pretty blue. She seemed a kindly old soul, but her extreme age precluded the hope that she could long be spared to bless my life, and a fear of long years of unconsolable widowerhood saddened me. But I had promised Doc. Warren to stand pat in this deal, no matter what I drew, so as soon as I could, safely, I crawfished over to her side and asked her gently if she knew whether or not I was her newly wedded husband.

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She said it was all so muddled up that she'd be blest if she could tell who was married and who wasn't. She said that everybody that was able to stand up stood up, and the justice of the peace rattled off something, and there wasn't light enough from the one old dirty oil lamp to distinguish faces, especially the faces of strangers.

By the time we reached my shack we had sobered up a good deal. We piled the women and child—dear, thin-legged, little Alexandrina, the sweetest youngone on earth!—all out there, and then we men drew off to one side and held a consultation, and found out that we were as much in the dark as was the old lady.

Jones crumpled right down under a big tree and began to cry.

"I don't give a hang what you do to me, I will not have that old woman!" he blubbered. "You're goin' to poke her off on me, I can see that plain enough, but I won't stand for it I tell you!"

"Aye lak dat Svede gal pooty vell," said Ole sadly.

"Who are all these women anyhow?" demanded Jones. "There are more women here than the bill calls for—and who does that thin long-legged youngone belong to? Who wants her, I'd like to know!"

"I'll take that youngone," I said, "She's just as gentle and pretty as she can be!"

"There's just one woman in the whole bunch that's worth taking!" declared Jones.

"Which one is that?" inquired Albert.

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"It's the yellow pompadour—the pretty one! But, of course, you all feel the same as I do, I suppose!"



"I dont," said Albert, "I'd rather have the one with her back platted into town lots, and her hat clean out of plumb—the stylish one."

"Aye lak dat Svede gal pooty vell," suggested Ole gently.

"So far as I am concerned," said I, "I am willing to become the stepfather of that dear, thin-legged little girl, no matter who her mother is."

"We all know who we want," said Jones petulantly, "but we don't know who we've got! Where are the licenses, Leffy. What did they say?"

"I got the licenses before the women came. I didn't know their names, of course, so I just had 'em filled in as they do in legal documents, Jane Doe, Jennie Doe, Jennet Doe, and J. Doe."

Then we looked up the certificates which that old dough-head of a justice had scratched off, and we found that they corresponded with the licenses and told us nothing.

"We each know the woman we want," said I decisively, "but we don't know whether we are married to the right one or not. Now there is only one way to be sure and that is to go back and start all over again!"

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"How's that?" asked Jones.

"Take 'em all back to town, all get divorces, and get married again soberly, decently, and in daylight, and to the right ones!"

But Jones objected. He said that would do very well for the rest, because they were just everyday common place sort of women; but to take that golden-haired beauty back to the gay town of Skookum, and leave her there all the time it would take to get a divorce would be to risk losing her entirely. Some Skookum man would put her in mind of the loneliness of ranch life, and she'd never come back up in here to live, in the world.

"Let's ask the women," I suggested, and they appointed me a committee of one to do so.

I went up to a tall, pleasant-faced woman, and began to open the case, but she stepped back and called softly, "Gabrielle!" and out came the daintiest little thing—I could see at once that she was better than pretty—she was fascinating!

"This is my daughter, Mrs. Roby," said the pleasant-faced woman. "I mean she was Mrs. Roby before she was married this morning."

Mrs. Roby had a bandage over one eye. Here, then, was the widow with the bad eye, as Doc. Warren had put it, the mother of the thin-



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legged little cherub whom I coveted.

I was gone in a minute!—all in, as they say.

She sat down upon a log and put a hand over the bandage as if in pain.

“What’s the matter with your eye?” I inquired kindly.

“Gone!” said she solemnly.

“You poor little thing!” said I, “But what of it! I am going to make you just as happy as a little queen out here. The railroad is coming through pretty soon, and we intend to start a sawmill and work up our own timber. You’ll be rich, and a rich woman don’t need but one eye.”

“Do you like me?” she inquired softly.

“Like you!” said I, “More than that!”

“And there is little Alexandrina —”

“I loved her before I ever saw you! I shall keep her whether you have me or not!”

“And there’s mother —”

“Well?”

“And grandmother —”

“Bring ’em on!” said I, “Aunt Susan and Uncle Phineas, Cousin Jerusha and John Henry! If your relations stood as thick as those cedars out yonder, I’d take ’em all—with you!”

Then if you’ll believe it, she shed that bandage then and there, and gleamed up at me through two of the prettiest eyes man ever gazed into.

“What made you do that?” I asked.

“I thought the wrong man wouldn’t be apt to choose a disfigured woman, and if there was

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a right one he would choose in spite of the disfiguration. If there wasn't any right one mother and I had planned to go out as cooks in Seattle, with grandmother to care for little Alexandrina."

Well now you may be sure I was glad enough that Jones was smitten with that yellow pompadour. I never liked the looks of that young woman from the very first; she was young, but she looked too wise to suit me. I wouldn't care to have this get out, for Jones thinks she is the one and only; he wouldn't stand anybody saying a thing against his wife. And Jones and Albert and Ole and I have always been good friends and neighbors, as I hope we always shall be. And I was glad that Albert took to the woman with the plaid mackintosh and that Ole "laked dat Svede gal pooty vell," leaving the widow with the bad eye and the encumbrances to me.

"I suppose we'll all have to get divorces," I said.

"I hardly believe that will be necessary," answered Gabrielle. "What is written in your marriage certificate?"

I took it out of my pocket and read: "This is to certify that Leffingwell Stroud and Jane Doe were this day united by me in the holy bonds of matrimony—" and so on.

"Christenings are much cheaper than divorces," said Gabrielle, and reaching down, she dipped her pretty fingers in a little rill



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and sprinkled a few drops over her own head. "I christen you Jane Doe," she said, "and I believe now we are as legally married as the law can make us."

We all gathered round and held a council of war, and as the women were satisfied, we adopted Ga—, I mean Jane Doe's, suggestion.

After the christening my wife and my mother-in-law got up a dinner—why say! everybody in the settlement talks of that dinner to this day! And evolved from just next to nothing, too! There isn't but one woman west of the Cascades who can cook better than my mother-in-law, and that is my wife, Jane Doe.

And this brings me to the sad part of my story:

I went right to work to build the swellest ranch house around the country in which to make my family comfortable. I had a great fireplace put in, and I bought a fine upholstered easy-chair, with elephant ears at the sides—you know the kind—for my grandmother-in-law to sit in beside the roaring blaze of my chimney, and tell my little Alexandrina fairy stories; and I built an elegant kitchen and pantry, equipped with all the latest devices for fine cooking, so that my mother-in-law could show off her fine points—there wasn't a man of 'em but who envied me my mother-in-law—and just as I had everything fixed to the queen's taste, along comes that old Doc. Warren back from the East and robbed me of my mother-in-law, and my grandmother-in-law! Yes sir! married my mother-in-law, and

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took her to Skookum to live, and of course, she took her mother with her.

Said I, "Doc., I never thought you'd do me dirt like this!" and then I heaved that easy-chair with earlappers up on top of the load of moving stuff—trunks and things which belonged to the bride—and says I, "Take it along! I can't bear the sight of it there by the fire! But," I says, "there's my wife and child left; no man can ever get them away from me."

"What'll you bet?" says Doc. "Look at that youngone, how she's shooting up. Before you can say Jack Robinson she'll be a young lady and some young rancher will come courting, and away will go another of your brood."

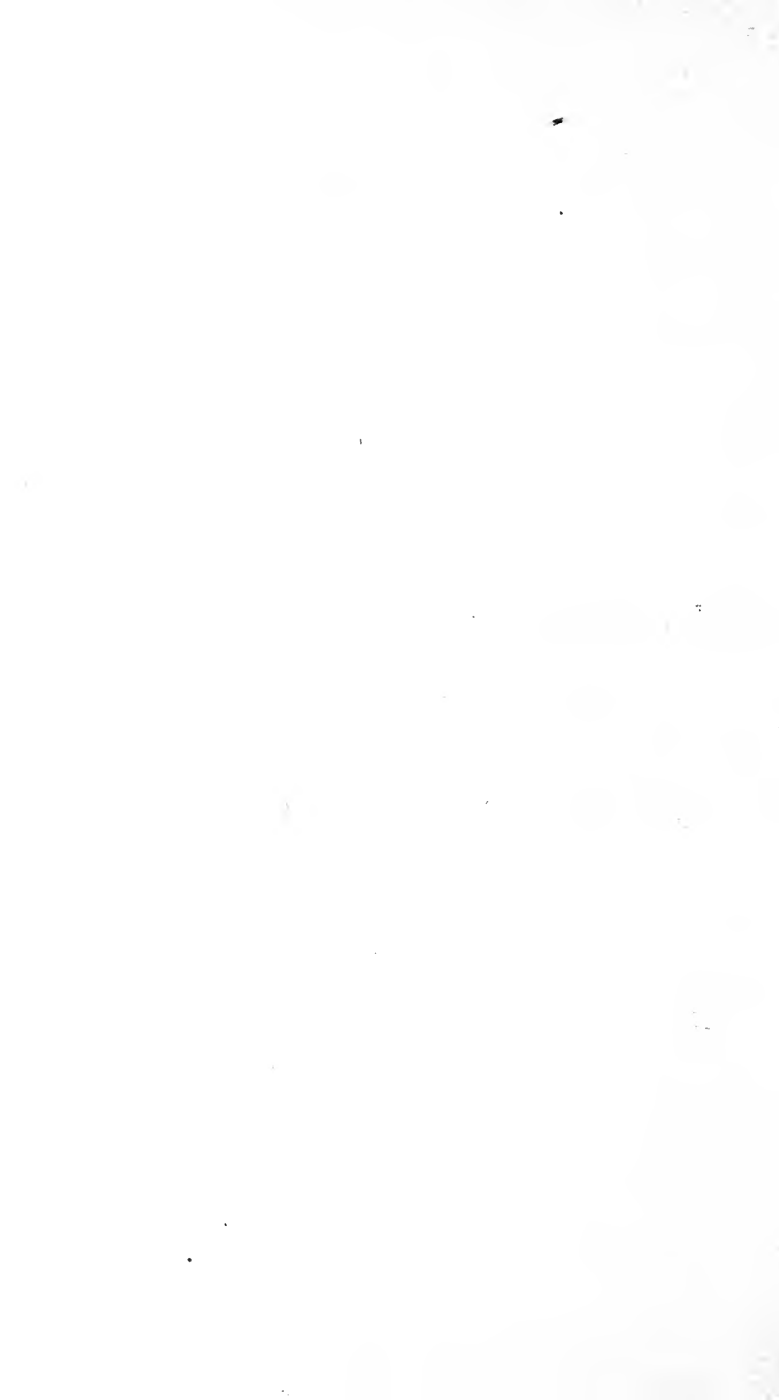
And I presume that's true.

Yes, we took great chances on that marriage deal, but we came out lucky after all. Jones has an ever-augmenting family, and his wife hasn't a particle of good looks left; but Jones doesn't know it. Albert just sits and lets his whiskers grow, and gazes with admiring eyes at the "stylish one," and Ole will stop work any time of day to assure you that he "laks dat Svede gal pooty vell!" My wife, Jane Doe, has all the beauty, and what's more to the point, all the brains, and it seems strange that the other men don't realize it.

*The Duchess of Rattle-
snake Prairie*

BY

FLORENCE MARTIN EASTLAND





"Near the door of the lean-to kitchen Joe had resumed his biscuit-making."

The Duchess of Rattlesnake Prairie

THE Round Hill school house bell had just sounded its morning invitation. When the teacher, Ida Hamilton, appeared at the door to shake a dust-cloth she saw two little strangers toiling up the frozen pathway. Their faces were blue with cold and occasionally they brought to their lips their mittenless fingers in vain efforts to breathe warmth into their frozen tips.

"Never mind, Baldy," remarked the larger, a girl, "we're here now an' we'll soon git warm. Don't cry; teacher 'll think you're not a nice boy."

"You poor babies!" Ida exclaimed compassionately, noting the thin ragged clothing. "Where did you come from? No; you need not tell me till you are warm. Here."

She drew her chair to the red-hot stove and took the boy on her lap, rubbing the rough, cracked hands. The little girl attended to her own needs in a most womanly fashion. When she became warmer she took from her apron pocket a note which she handed to the teacher.

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“‘Fraid you cayn’t make it out,” she smiled. “Maw allers writes with so many kinks an’ the ink was froze; but I kin tell you what she says.”

The “kinks” resolved themselves into a badly expressed wish that the teacher would call the children by their full names, Gwendolin and Archibald Dinwiddie.

“Don’t do it,” entreated the child. “Everybody laughs at ’em an’ paw calls us jest Linny an’ Baldy an’ the baby Essy—her real name is Esmereldy.”

“We will see,” Ida answered. Other children entered and after a little the last bell signalled them to their seats. At the conclusion of the opening song Ida announced:

“We have two new pupils this morning from Rattlesnake Prairie. They have such grand names, Gwendolin and Archibald, that they do not harmonize with our plain ones, Susie and Sadie, Annie and Ida, Taylor and John, so I think we will do as their father does and call them Linny and Baldy, except,”—she paused and smiled into the upturned puzzled faces—“on great occasions like our entertainments, when we will use their full names.”

Books were quietly taken out and the routine of the day began. According to the business-like program fastened above the front blackboard, the infant class recited first. Baldy was called up with two others who had learned to read a little.

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"Do you know this word, Baldy?" inquired Ida as she pointed to the lesson printed on the board.

"D-o-g," was the reply spelled slowly.

"Why you know your letters," commented the teacher. "Now tell me the word."

"Duchess," loudly declared the boy. A suppressed titter rippled around the room, soon silenced by Ida's warning glance. Linny, sitting close by, put up a timid hand above a troubled brow.

"Please, teacher, he only knows his letters. Paw told him D stood for Duchess."

"Duchess of Rattlesnake Prairie," interrupted Baldy. "That's what paw calls maw."

Tears rose in the eyes of the sensitive girl; but Ida with another look at the amused pupils reassured her by observing pleasantly:

"Your father must think a great deal of your mother when he gives her such a fine title. A duchess is a great person indeed."

"He does," was the earnest reply. "He tells maw every day he ain't good enough for her, but that ain't so."

"Now show me how nicely you can write your father's name while I finish this lesson," returned Ida hastily.

The children interested and puzzled her. Neglect, sturdiness of character and ability to solve their own problems were strongly in evidence. During the next week she could learn nothing of the new-comers who lived two miles

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off the main road. She resolved to make a call Sunday afternoon on the parents of her pupils.

As she drove up the bad road of the rented farm she caught a glimpse of a curl-papered head at the uncurtained window. Immediately a couple of barking hounds sprang out of the door followed by a good-natured giant with floury hands. With a word he silenced the dogs.

"Howdy, Miss," was his greeting. "Linny seen you comin' an' said you're her teacher. Come in."

"Thank you, Mr. Dinwiddie," replied Ida, alighting before he could brush the flour from his hands.

He regarded her sheepishly.

"Jest Joe, Miss. Laury, my wife, you know, carries all the honors. She'll be right glad to see you."

They passed into the cabin and with great pride Joe presented Ida to his wife, who sat in an old hickory rocker. The curl papers had vanished and in their stead rows of straw-colored ringlets clustered around the forehead and ears of the Duchess. Her pale blue eyes shone kindly while a smile shortened the lip above the prominent teeth. With quite the air of an exalted dame she motioned Ida to a seat on the only unoccupied splint-bottom chair.

For a time Ida was overcome by the studied negligence of the Duchess and surprise at finding the frail little woman upholding such an impressive manner. She glanced about the room and noted its disorder and poverty. In a home-

The Duchess of Rattlesnake Prairie

made cradle by the untidy bed lay a sleeping child with very dirty face. Near the door of the lean-to kitchen Joe had resumed his biscuit-making, and near by little Linny was trying to comb Baldy's hair. The eyes of the Duchess followed Ida's and with a fetching sigh she observed:

"I kin guess what you're thinkin' of, Miss Hamilton; but when a woman marries beneath her she musn't expect to have everything nice around her. Joe does the best he kin, but—" She paused with a deprecatory wave of her hand while she pathetically shook her ringlets.

Ordinarily Ida, the energetic, would have breezed a little wholesome discipline into her reply to a speech so entirely at variance with her common-sense principles. She was therefore amazed to hear herself saying:

"Every sacrifice costs something."

Immediately she realized the import of her remark and she glanced apologetically at Joe. He nodded contentedly over his biscuit-pan.

"My little woman, the Duchess there, made a great mistake when she took me. I knowed it at the time, an' we've tried to make the best of it. She'd orter married the quality."

"I think she did," returned Ida with her eyes on the wholesome honest face.

"Who—me? Well now, ain't that a joke? Why I cayn't hardly read an' write; but Laury there knows them books nearly all by heart."

He pointed to a row of paper-back novels on a shelf. Beside them lay heaps of "Ledgers" and

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"Family Journals." One survey was sufficient to account for the airs of the Duchess.

"Yes, sir;" he continued, "many's the night she's set in her cheer till mornin' a-readin' 'em. 'Tain't any ord'n'y woman that 'll do thet." The baby awoke and cried. The mother paid no attention, but continued her posing while Joe came and put on the child's shoes and gave her some milk.

"It is true," declared the Duchess plaintively. "I was so young when I married—only sixteen—'t I didn't re'lize I was throwin' myself away. Ef I'd only waited I'm sure I could 'a' married into the aristocracy. Think of me tied down with children when I might be holdin' court in a splendid palace."

Ida was interested in spite of her disapproval of the hopeless condition of the Duchess. She could not comprehend the situation. Here was a narrow-chested delicate woman with no semblance of beauty, who compelled a sturdy adoring protector to spoil her life as well as his own by humoring her absurd pretenses. Did he really believe in his wife? There was no doubt of it. Ida herself felt something of the dominant power of the pretender.

Yet something should be done. The domestic peace of a family possibly rested upon successfully arousing the woman to a perception of her deficiencies; and Ida was young and conscientious. She found her judgment, however, less acute when confronted by this strange family, so she resolved to study the situation before at-

The Duchess of Rattlesnake Prairie

tempting to bring the Duchess to a realization of her failure as a wife and mother.

On her homeward drive she concluded her most effective plan would be a hint to Joe at the first opportunity. It came sooner than she expected. Upon reaching the school-house next morning she found him waiting in his farm wagon. Anxiety clouded his open face.

"The children won't be to school today. I left 'em home to set with their maw. She was took with a hard chill last night an' her fever to-day is awful high. I thought mebby you'd know of some woman I could git to come fer a few days."

"Why, yes; Hannah Manley is an excellent nurse and lives three miles east of here. She will go, I am sure. Was your wife ill when I left yesterday?"

"No, no!" Joe hastily affirmed, "she was better'n I've seen her fer some time. Said it done her good to meet somebody her ekal. She had a faintin' spell after supper, but she has them right often—jest like high-toned ladies," he concluded with a wan smile.

The little Dinwiddies failed to appear each morning of the ensuing week. As no word of their mother's condition had come to Ida, she decided to go over Saturday morning to see the sick woman.

The baying hounds greeted her unchecked before she silenced them with a flourish of her whip. Tying her horse to the rotten pickets of the garden fence, she tapped lightly at the door. Han-

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nah Manley appeared and motioned her to enter. Before her eyes sought the Duchess she noticed the cleanliness and order.

The bed had been pulled near the center of the room and above the clean sheet laid over the bed-covers arose the hollowed face. Her breath came with difficulty between the parched lips and her eyes were staring and glassy. The baby lay asleep on the foot of the bed. Near by the children stood sobbing quietly. By his wife's side knelt Joe, overwhelming misery expressed in his tearless eyes.

"Laury, Laury girl, cayn't you see me or hear me? It's Joe, yer old rough, unworthy Joe. Little girl—ye—ain't—goin'?" he cried, as he chafed her thin hands. "Little Duchess, my little Duchess," he moaned in despair.

Hannah Manley, sorrowfully shaking her head in answer to Ida's look of inquiry, poured some brandy between the colorless lips. Soon the breathing became less labored and the eyes grew natural. The sick woman motioned Ida to come nearer.

"Tell 'em to go out fer a little," she whispered weakly. "I want to speak to you."

Fortified by another dose of brandy administered as the family withdrew, she seemed almost herself again, putting up a trembling hand to arrange the damp hair above her forehead.

"It looks very well," observed Ida soothingly. "Now while you are stronger tell me what you wish to say."

The Duchess of Rattlesnake Prairie

"Joe has been good to me," she said, faintly, after a long pause. "I want to tell you, but not him, thet I've found out durin' this sickness jest how selfish I've be'n an' what a poor wife I've made him. He thinks I'm 'way above most women, an' when I'm gone I want him to think of me like that an' tell the children what a fine woman I was, jest as he allers has."

She paused exhausted. As Ida rearranged the pillows to raise the tired head she thought of the pitiful passion strong even at death's door, that had made the life of the poor little Duchess a mockery. Incomprehensible was the attitude of the dying wife. With never a thought of her future existence, her last desire was to perpetuate a sham. While Ida was trying to frame a suitable suggestion of the hereafter, the failing voice resumed:

"Gwendolin 'll soon be able to do a right smart about the house. She's conside'ble handy now. Mebby you'll come sometimes an' learn her how to do things. Joe will git along 'bout as well without me, only he will miss me. I want him to. He's all I've ever had to worship me; an' ef he marries ag'in—I s'pose he will—no other woman 'll ever take my place."

"Have you thought of anything else—the life beyond?" inquired Ida noting the growing weakness.

"No; it makes my headache. I—ain't afeared. Call Joe and' "—her voice trailed off faintly—"don't—tell—him."

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Ida quickly summoned the others and went into the kitchen. After a time Joe staggered out. His face was drawn and gray, his eyes hopeless in their woe.

"She's gone," he groaned. "I never deserved her. She was 'way above me; but I could look up to her an' be thankful every day I had her to work fer."

His broad shoulders shook and he bowed his head in his hands. Quick tears rolled down Ida's cheeks—tears of sympathy for Joe and regret for the hasty judgment which had condemned as useless the life of the poor little Duchess. But her heart throbbed in thankfulness that, through her sense of duty, she had not robbed a simple soul of his highest ideal.

A Letter to Cecilia

BY

MABEL VOLLINTINE MCGILL

A Letter to Cecilia

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!"



BOVE his writing-table hung Cecilia's portrait, the one he had painted that last summer she was at home. Whatever his other possibilities as an artist might be, he certainly *could* paint Cecilia, could catch and hold fast on canvas the elusive beauty of her face, with its sweet, eager eyes, its tender mouth. His weekly letters (posted weekly, but written in daily instalments) and her picture before him as he wrote had served infinitely to lighten the four dreary years of her absence. With the help of these, he, who was of none too patient temper, had not failed in the task of enforced patience he had set himself—the awaiting that time when Cecilia, having tried her wings, having absorbed the best that the ateliers could give her, should return, like a homing dove, to the hand that had sent her forth.

And now he would meet his reward—she was coming home!

"This is my last letter," he wrote, "for you will sail on the twenty-seventh. It rejoices me,

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dear, that your heart yearns toward the old home and the old friends. Your country needs your art, and we need *you*!

“I suppose I shall have no more letters from you; although, to be sure, your last one is dated more than six weeks ago. But then, your writing always did leave much to be desired in respect of frequency. The more I consider that last letter, the odder it seems that you could have written such a *de profundis* sort of thing. It only goes to show that periods of depression will come to all young creatures with ‘temperament’—even to you, the hopeful, the ardent. However, that was six weeks ago; and today you are happy enough, I doubt not, for your father and mother are with you, and to witness their delight in the things they have dreamed all their lives of seeing and enjoying would, I am sure, cheer up the most melancholy young person living.

“What innocent old creatures they are! I wonder, Cissy, if you and Philip do properly appreciate your parents and the simple, beautiful lives they have lived out here in the country. Few people have more of hard work or of skillful management to their credit; and yet they have always taken time for books and flowers. How perfectly mated they are, how wholly as one in their efforts to give their children the best that the world affords in the way of opportunity for knowledge and culture. Let me tell you, if they had had no children to rear and educate,

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they would have realized many years earlier their dream of European travel.

"How it must add to their happiness to find that you are coming home with them; that at the most you will not be separated from them henceforth by more than a few hours' journey.

"Today, as I sit thinking of you, the years that are past come thronging upon me with more than their ordinary insistence. I see myself, young in years but aged and worn by the feverish existence of the Latin Quarter, seeking health through the 'back to nature' process on the farm of my father's old friend. I see you, a girl of nine, with your hair in one long pig-tail down your back. It was the honor and glory of imparting to you—wonderful, wide-eyed child of genius that you were!—all that some years of the ateliers had taught me that more than half decided me to become your permanent next-door neighbor. The lesser argument was the realization that I had found my line and that the life of woods and fields was the life for me. A few years more of the Quarter, and there would have been little left of me, body or soul. It is hard for you, perhaps, to understand this, since glimpses at most are all you get of the aspects of life with which I came in close—alas! overwhelming—contact. Yet on the other hand perhaps you do understand, for even the glimpses are enough, poor child, to induce in you the profound dissatisfaction voiced in your last letter. At least, this seems to me a probable explanation of your melancholy.

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“How can I ever be grateful enough to you, Cissy, and to your dear people, for these happy years that I have known? For while I taught you to paint I was taught the practical acquaintance with nature and the sound and rational view-points of wholesome, out-of-door people, as well as many other things that make for true wisdom and spiritual culture.

“And then, forsooth, you must needs upset the well-ordered serenity of our lives with your ambition! *Mea culpa! Mea culpa!* I was your abettor—I confess it. I helped you to persuade your father and mother and Phil to let you go—but then all of us loved you too well to wish to fetter your wings. And I knew that with your strength of character and purpose, and the sound common-sense that your rearing had bred, you would pass through even the student-life of Paris ‘unspotted from the world.’ Ah! and I wanted you to achieve success and fame. Not that these have much intrinsic worth, but that they are assuredly valuable inasmuch as they are an inspiration to further and better work.

“Yet, Cissy (I have never confessed this to you before, have I?), after I had settled you in Paris the journey home was most dismal; and often and often the old tormenting question harassed me, Is it worth while? But that is all past now. Your success has been more than even we dared hope; of the three young American women who exhibited this year your name is mentioned the oftenest and with the most unqualified distinction—and you only twenty-two! Oh, yes,

A Letter to Cecilia

it was well worth while, dear, for now it is all over—and you are coming home!

“I have been alone all day—not a soul but me on either farm. The apple-trees are in full blossom, and everybody is away on some mysterious errand of his own. Phil leaves nothing to be desired in his management of the farm—I doubt if even his father could do better—and all the week works so hard as to be quite above criticism in that regard; but when Sunday comes—well, you know, ‘In the spring a young man’s fancy.’ He goes early in the morning and returns after the rest of us are abed; so you see it is a serious matter. The girl seems a nice sort, and will doubtless make you a fairly satisfactory sister-in-law; but naturally I am inclined to be captious where Phil is concerned.

“I wonder, Cissy dear, if you think of me as a decidedly elderly fellow. I suppose I *am* getting older every day, but somehow it’s mighty hard to realize the fact.

“*Au revoir*, little girl. Three weeks from tonight we’ll surely be together!

“Your ever affectionate Van.”

He sealed and directed the envelope, then took his pipe and went out on the veranda to smoke. It was the lingering twilight of a day in late spring. A slender moon had begun its westering descent; the freshly browsed grass of the pasture, the blossom-laden trees of the orchard, wafted their delicate odors to him through the still air. In great content he sat and dreamed of the day so near at hand, when he should see

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again in the flesh the girl whose dear, questioning eyes looked at him from the pictured face above the writing-table.

What would she say when he told her all his heart? Never yet had he breathed a word of his love: he had chosen, against all the protestations of his passionate heart, to leave her bright youth free as air. Love's turn would come later, he had told himself, when art and ambition had had theirs. He must be perfectly fair, must bide his time till the day when he should be justly entitled to claim his own, if in truth Cecilia and he were meant for each other, as seemed to him so clearly obvious. Not that he, or any other man for that matter, was worthy of her; but who could love her better than he, and who could understand her half so well? So ideal an intimacy had always existed between them, so close a sympathy, that such a little, little more was needed to weld their souls together in the bond of passion.

The pain of her absence was all past now; she was coming home—coming to him—coming of her own free will. The time remaining was too scant to signify; she was all but here—his girl, his beauty, his own little artist love!

* * * * *

“Hello, Van! Enjoying the young May moon by your lonesome?”

A tall figure came around the corner of the house and up the steps.

Thus rudely aroused, the dreamer returned to consciousness of the present.

A Letter to Cecilia

"You already, Phil? What means this early desertion of your *fiancee*?"

"Yes, it is a little early, I admit," the young fellow replied, helping himself to a chair. "The fact is," he said hesitatingly, "I hurried back because I have some news for you that I didn't feel I ought to delay very long in delivering. I'm afraid I don't consider it altogether good news, though," he added a little ruefully. "I don't know what you will think."

"Why, what's the trouble?" exclaimed the older man, made vaguely uneasy by the other's tone.

"Well, on my way through the village this morning I stopped at the postoffice and found a letter from the folks—that is, from mother and Cissy—and a note enclosed from Cissy to you. I suppose you might as well get the news from her direct."

He drew an envelope from his pocket, extracted a small folded sheet from its contents, and handed it to his friend, who, thoroughly agitated now, received it with shaking fingers. Unaccompanied by Philip, who lit a cigar and sat smoking moodily, he went into the sitting-room and lit the lamp.

Thus had Cissy written:

"Dearest Van:—Before you read this I shall have become a married woman. For full details you are to read mother's and my letters to Philip; but, hurried as I am, I must send you a line for yourself, my dear old Van, to explain that last wretched, gloomy letter of mine. I can't re-

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member all I said, but I believe among other things I threatened to come home. I was very unhappy when I wrote; there was a misunderstanding between him and me (something that neither of us was really to blame for) which just at that time had reached its blackest, most desperate stage.

“Just a day or two after I had written that letter all was made clear between us, and when mother and father arrived we begged them to let us be married while they were here, so that they could see us nicely settled before they returned home. For once it was pretty hard to bring them my way; but when they came to look into the matter thoroughly—to learn what he is thought of as artist and man—they finally relented. Really, Van, he is going to be a great man; indeed he is a great man already. It seems to me that a young couple could scarcely have a more encouraging outlook than ours.

“We shall live in Paris for the present—probably for some years to come. After that, our plans are uncertain.

“Write to me soon, my best of friends, and wish me happiness!

“Ever your loving Cissy.”

The bit of paper slipped through his nerveless fingers to the floor. For a space his brain was literally lapped in unconsciousness by the sudden upward surge of frightful anguish. Then he pulled himself together and extinguished the light—Phil must not see his face!

A Letter to Cecilia

As he returned to the veranda the young man looked up with the question:

"What do you think of it?"

"I can't form an opinion on such short notice." His voice sounded unfamiliar even to himself, and he wondered bitterly if he could not keep even a thoughtless young fellow like Phil from suspecting how it was with him. But he went bravely on: "By the way, I finished a letter to her an hour or so ago. I suppose it might as well go along just as it is—I can add a postscript wishing her joy. Isn't that your horse whinnying, Phil? He wants to get back to his stable."



Five Dollars

BY

FRANCETTE MARING

Five Dollars

“FIVE DOLLARS! Yes, children, Miss Givens gave me a five-dollar gold piece and told me to spend it the way that would do us the most good.”

A minute's silence, almost consternation followed this announcement—then Tom Mulligan turned a hand-spring (his specialty), Sam and Susan grasped hands and spun around until both fell over dizzy—and big Harry clapped his hands.

“What shall we do with it?”

“I say, Ma,” said Susan, “Let's do have a ride in one of them mobile things. They are just five dollars an hour and each one of us would have as much fun as the other one.”

“Good! Good! Goodie!” shouted the young tribe.

Mrs. Mulligan had longed for a ride in one of those wonderful horseless vehicles, but would hardly have suggested that way of spending this particular gold-piece.

Big Harry, who sold evening papers on the street corners, had more idea of the value of five dollars than the mother and the other children combined and he suggested that they hold the money for winter necessities.

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"No! No!" That didn't suit the family and it was decided, amid shouts of pleasure, that a ride in an automobile was to be the order of the day. Harry submitted to the plan and started to the Broadway garage to hire the machine.

Now, it so happened that Pat Moriarty was chauffeur for a wealthy citizen; his master, who was the owner of a big white steamer, was out of town and Pat had been left in charge. He and Harry had had many a chat on Second Avenue, one holding down the auto and the other the street corner, the latter occasionally yelling: "Times—Star. All about the suicide. Paper, mister?—Times, sir? Star?"

Harry hailed, "Hello, Pat, we want to git one of them machines to take the family out. Who is a good driver?"

Pat looked wise and thinking the matter a joke, said: "I'll take yees."

"Shure, Pat?"

"Shure, Harry, for the same price as the other fellows, five dollars an hour."

Harry, to Pat's utter bewilderment, handed him the gold-piece and then Pat began to wonder what kind of a furore would follow if his master should ever know that he took the Muligan family out in his white steamer, but he was true to his bargain and called for them at two o'clock.

When Harry returned to the family and described the beautiful auto in which they were to have a ride, excitement reigned supreme.

Five Dollars

Such a washing of hands, faces, yes, and feet, was never experienced in that household. To be sure, when finished there was a streak of black on the outer rim of every ear and a streak at the neckline, but the family posed as clean, and they were decidedly so for the Mulligans.

Jack and Sam each found stockings but had only one pair of shoes, and they wrestled to see who should wear them. Jack won and Sam was inconsolable until he spied an old pair of Harry's oxfords. He donned them in glee. Fit or misfit didn't count—only covering.

Susan wanted very much to wear a veil and her mother's gloves, and Mrs. Mulligan, feeling especially good tempered, allowed her to have one of her gloves.

"I say, give Ma her other glove, looks as if you haint got no hand and fastened that glove on your wrist cause you didn't have a wooden hand." But Susan's pride was supreme and the glove suited her.

"Ma, you must have something tied around your hat. I never seed a lady a-riding in style without, and I'm the only girl and I want something too."

Mrs. Mulligan and Susan hauled out some things that had been left by charitable ladies to be made over for Susan.

(Mrs. Mulligan had no machine and didn't have much time except to do washing for a family for recompense.)

Such things to search among for a veil, waists and waists, boned and boned and cut in such tiny

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pieces, bits of lace, worn out hose, old jackets, long past any use, in fact, many garments fit only for patch work—but—yes—it will do, a dimity dress skirt—not all gored into bits—almost the only thing in the collection which could be utilized for a dress for Susan. It could be torn into strips and used on their hats, and they felt quite elated over the success.

The clock on the shelf struck two and at the same moment Pat blew his Gabriel horn. The excited family scrambled in and filled both seats. Pat's eyes twinkled; he saw a bit of fun ahead. "Shure, and we all had the toime of our lives," said Pat, when he returned the Mulligans to their home at three o'clock.

Pat had another surprise. Mr. Givens, his master, was awaiting him at the garage. He had been informed of the use his beautiful white car had been put to and poor Pat was summarily dismissed.

A few days later the philanthropic Miss Givens called again upon the family. She was regaled with a most thrilling story of the ride her five dollars had bought for the Mulligans. "Gee, but we whizzed round the corners." "The auto was a big white beauty." "You gave us such fun, Miss Givens." The young lady was really overwhelmed with their exuberance.

That evening she entertained the guests at dinner by a very comical description of the use the money had been put to and her father leaned back from the table and laughed as she had never thought him capable of laughing. Then he told

Five Dollars

the story of Pat, and after a conference it was agreed, with a proviso, that Pat should be reinstated.

The proviso was that Pat must buy a ton of coal with that five dollars and send it to the Mulligans.

*The Taming of the
Barons*

BY

CORA CHASE CHARLTON



"Below, a gracefully rounded valley."

The Taming of the Barons

CHAPTER I.



HERE in the great northwest, no less than in the more exploited southwest, romance after romance has been weaving its vivid color into local history until it would seem that every acre must represent something worth telling.

How John Oswald, he of the baronly blood, came to leave off "promiscuous peregrinations" for "pastoral pursuits," as he once expressed it, and how, later, he came to yield up his gay bachelorhood, may be one of the things worth telling.

John was a queer mixture to find in the wilds of the "Inland Empire" twelve years ago; for anybody who saw his particular locality in those days would have said "wilderness." A look at his present time ranch with its luxurious home, helpers' thrifty cottages, magnificent orchards and Columbia River steamers loading almost tropical fruit for less favored regions, would suggest anything but that.

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Remarkable changes one might say to have taken place in so short a time, but that is the West and the charm of it. If the man has changed as much as the landscape it can be ascribed to the old transforming power of love, no less potent in one place than another.

To begin with, the John Oswald one saw at first glance was so scholarly and esthetic and had such classic features that he was inconceivable off the stage or out of some professional career, and more than one man had been deceived to his undoing by this exterior, for there was another John within him entirely in harmony with this wilderness, and in every way a consistent descendant of his castle-storming, boar-hunting, maiden harrying ancestors.

To account for him at all one was forced to consider heredity; he was such a tantalizing mixture of amiability and temper, of winning tenderness and bombastic tyranny, of cautious prudence and whirlwind changes.

In this more than dual personality, then, one might trace the eternal struggle for supremacy between the line of gruff old barons on his father's side, (himself a stormy political exile subdued into a fiery editorial scribe in America) and the Priscilla-like grand dames of his sweet little New England mother.

If the ultra refined New York aunt and uncle into whose care he and his modest estate fell when he was ten, had understood boys as well as estates John's history might have been different; however, his conformity to their well meant plans

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for his future seemed the accepted state of affairs up to his twenty-third year. Then occurred what one might call "the Baronial Renaissance" and things happened. New York and his customary routine shrank to oppressive limits, and every fibre of his young manhood called aloud for a more tensely active physical existence. It came over him that there was nothing big enough and untamed enough for him in this mood but the great West.

No need to dwell upon the indignant disappointment of John's guardians when he refused to see the West from any Pullman window, hotel-piazza standpoint, but insisted on going forth an adventurous tenderfoot. They had to accept the situation under the comfortable delusion that six months of it would suffice.

The succeeding two years only confirmed John in the adventuring habit, and the end of that time found him the tacit leader of a party of prospectors leaving the railroad terminus at Spokane Falls (now the bright thriving city, crisp Spokane) for a trip into the heart of the Cascades.

To the present day tourist, who is whisked from the park-like pleasantries of the Spokane region into the Cascade scenery in less than a half day's time, the intermediary landscape offers just the right touch of contrast; to John and his party, with their trailing pack horses it seemed an interminable stretch of sagebrush and sand, ending, as they neared the Columbia River, in a veritable desert, where even the sagebrush

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admitted defeat before the hot sand and piles of crumbling rock formation. Beyond this mighty Hudson of the West the country changed for the better, and there lay the bit of landscape that was responsible for John's new tack.

After crossing the river, which was accomplished with the aid of an Indian guide and his craft, they followed for some miles up stream the "Cultus trail," a particularly difficult route which hugged the river, at one moment leading them along the edge of a precipice, the next through some tunneled passageway under an insurmountable obstruction.

In few but telling words the Indian guide pictured to them the occasion when nature's violence left this indestructable record of her angry mood; for within his memory had a great mountain, started by volcanic disturbances, toppled over into the stream, completely daming it for a few hours, so that its bed could be crossed, like the Red Sea of old, dryshod.

To be sure the sweeping river of turquoise tints, the swelling foothills and their timber, climaxed by the glistening snow-capped peaks of the range, gave the scene plenty of grandeur, but the "near to" was mighty repelling John thought, and he "cussed" mildly as his cayuse strained along.

Then, with scarcely any intimation of what was coming, there lay, hundreds of feet below them, a gracefully rounded valley in emerald contrast to the surrounding colorless landscape. It nestled amid a bulwark of frowning, craggy

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bluffs except where the Columbia swept one section of its circle. Here soft grasses and deciduous trees grew flourishingly. The reason was not far to seek. A generous spring seeped out of a bluff and watered the valley to perfection.

The guide pointed to this valley as the site of the night's camp, and slowly zigzagging down the trail they reached its welcome level and refreshing verdure, and soon most of them turned their attention from the camp fire and supper to their blankets. Not so John, for something in that valley struck an answering response in his heart right from the start, neither was it all due to sentiment, for while the average man in the region knew nothing or talked nothing but gold, John's keen eyes had taken in the surprising results apparent where a little water had been applied to the rich volcanic soil through the rude system of irrigation in use by the settlers.

As moonlight chanced to lend its enchantment to the scene that night he strode back and forth for an hour or so before betaking himself to his saddle pillow and blankets. The burden of his sub-conscious soliloquy must have been something after this fashion, "delightful nook of nature's contriving, what a beautiful retreat you might prove. Imagination pictures you some feudal stronghold," (the baronly instinct no doubt recognized the resemblance), "with walls, and moat and pinnacles of rock for towers at the only two approaches. A veritable little kingdom set apart for some man to claim. Say! blest if I don't do it myself."

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His companions, who loved and hated John by turns, knew his idiosyncracies pretty well by that time but even they were a dumbfounded group, when, next morning he coolly announced that they might ride on, as he had decided to stake his claim right where he stood, and with just as good prospects as though he should search the Cascades 'till doomesday.

No explanation as to beautiful scenery or rich soil reached their unsentimental souls, or allayed the suspicions of some, that John had secretly discovered "showings" in the valley. Finding arguments in vain, (how the New York relatives could have sympathized), and moreover seeing the ire beginning to rise in John's eyes, they rode reluctantly on, leaving John his share of accoutrements and vainly wondering what there was in that particular spot to have locoed their leader.

And right there John stayed, as much to his own surprise as anyone's, finding in the contrast of ruggedness and dainty beauty that surrounded him something satisfying to the extremes in his own nature.

CHAPTER II.

Some seasons later, spring with its chorus of meadow-larks and other "up-to-date attractions," was lending its seductiveness to the "Oswald Valley," as it came to be called.

As the result of considerable energetic work and several trips out to civilization, John was basking in the comforts of quite a well-appointed establishment. He kept a hired man to "run things," and John "ran" the hired man, and at a lively gait by times when both work and amusement palled on him, and even a hunt was voted dull sport by the barons. He enjoyed no companionship closer than that of his horses, dogs and books.

Then, one forenoon, (there is no room for surprise after the glimpses given of John's abruptness) he decided that now was a suitable time for him to consider matrimony! He approached the subject quite in the cold-blooded manner to be expected of one to whom Cupid was a total stranger. The ultimate consummation seemed advisable and even desirable but the intermediary processes of courtship for instance, loomed up a great bore. Another proof that the little god had no hand in the affair.

The fancied "Mrs. John Oswald" that he finally evolved was such a climax of perfection

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in all details that the most exalted cult of any modern city might have been searched for her in vain. John ruefully admitted that there might be some difficulty in locating her. The solution he hit upon was that he would return to the New York fold temporarily and pursue his search. Result, his aunt, amid the smothery refinements of her New York home, reading aloud to her husband, with many exclamatory interspersions, the following:

My Esteemed Aunt:

How well I am punished for neglecting you, by finding that I must ask a favor.

I am thinking of wintering in New York with a view to furbishing up my wardrobe and my gentility generally. Why fence, my discerning aunt, so I admit that I am considering matrimony and would enlist your good judgment and social prestige as first "aids" in the necessary campaign.

In considering the suitable party, please remember that the one *positively necessary* requisite must be educational and literary attainments.

Will announce my further plans after having heard from you touching this letter's contents.

Your returning prodigal,

JOHN OSWALD.

"Philip," said the lady, upon finishing, "if the brilliant Clara La Forge can not teach that complacent goose more in one minute about women and love than he ever knew before, I am mistaken. Cleverly managed and we will have

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John in New York from now on and a barbarian no longer."

But Cupid, the sly, knew a manoeuvre or two of his own. Realizing that no field is more favorable for his activities than the anomalous social conditions of a pioneer region, and stung, no doubt, by John's slighting oversight of his rightful share in such an affair, he was lying in wait for him with an extra quiver full.

Now it chanced that in acquiring a title to his valley, a strip of twenty acres or more on the south side was not included, but as new settlers were rare it never occurred to John that any other mortal might lay claim to anything within that natural enclosure.

One balmy morning, as this would-be "monarch-of-all-he-surveyed" rode forth, he espied a smoke curling up from the strip; not strange, as prospectors still occasionally camped there, but as it was late in the day for them to be lingering, John galloped off in that direction to investigate. He looked quite the landed proprietor with his equestrian boots, good mount, and powerful Dane at heels, and there is nothing on record to show that he was not vainly conscious of the part.

Rounding a hillock he came upon a sight that brought both his horse and his breath momentarily to a standstill; for a typical Arkansaw mover's outfit was as foreign to anything in John's experience as a totem-pole pedigree would be to a cotton state coon.

A small tent and a dilapidated prairie schooner were disposed with a view to perma-

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nence. Domestic utensils lay scattered about. A woman was cooking over a camp-fire and two disheveled children were having a rough and tumble play with at least five hounds. A tired-looking man was leading a pair of lean and harness-worn mules up from the ditch stream. They were probably the first the region ever saw. The hounds set up a great howling, and the group turned and saw John in the act of dismounting and giving his Dane a cut with his riding whip, with the command, "Stand still, sir!"

Either the appearance of the group, or the impudence of the hounds, something, started John off into a whirlwind of unreasonable anger. Veritable blue blazes shone in his eyes. Even the hounds slunk away, and the woman halted in her hospitable intention of greeting the stranger. The man looked as if he meditated flight, if he had been in the habit of doing anything so sudden and energetic.

After the barons (per John's flashing eyes) had sufficiently scorched the group, he burst forth: "What in h—l do you call this layout! Where did you come from and where are you trying to get to?"

After a few choking attempts the man made audible the reply:

"We cum frum Arkinsaw; that is, we've bin a cumin' frum thah off an' on of two years. We-uns wuz kalkilatin' tuh git further up thuh river to thuh Big Bend country, but 't seemed like we'd got tuh stop some whah now, tuh git in a crap. Sis, that is, we-uns, we liked thuh look of



"When a firm but musical voice called from the tent door."

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this here level an' we 'lowed we could squat, but 'course, stranger, ef thuh land is yourn we'll vamoose."

The very meekness of this overture seemed to enrage John even more. He fairly yelled:

"I *don't* own the land, but I'll control it, never you fear, and no d—d product of the Arkansas swamps shall plant himself here. (Blank-ety, blank, blank!) You pull out of here you malarial, clay-eating refugee!"

"Yes, yes, we will stranger. Jest give us time tuh pick up our traps, won't yuh?" the thoroughly frightened man was saying, when a firm but musical voice called from the tent door, "Paw." "Paw" turned to the door and the voice said something inaudible to John, whatever it was, it acted like magic on the man's spinal column. He very perceptibly stood more erect, and actually looked John in the eye as he said: "Ef I understand you tuh say, stranger, that the land ain't yourn, by what rights can you order we-uns off like we wuz dogs. Sis says, that is we-uns say, that we air agoin' tuh stay till somebody shows rights tuh order us off."

Fairly gasping from this burst of nerve, he began to look as if he might weaken, when the female of the tent, garbed in calico mother-hub-bard and sunbonnet, (which reveals little), stepped forward composedly, held out a splint-bottomed chair, and said in tones of honeyed mischief:

"Paw, invite the stranger to set while he's stoppin' at we-all's."

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With an actual snort of rage John strode off, flung himself onto his horse and galloped away, vaguely planning to return with his shotgun and drive the intruders back to Arkansaw. Increasing moments cooled his white heat of anger, however, and he decided that instead he would turn the water off from the strip, leaving them without a supply.

Next morning this course looked small to him. Several days passed, but John did not deign to glance in the direction of the strip, although he had reminders by way of baying hounds and the reports of a shotgun in the direction of his grouse roost that kept his temper peppery. Something must be done. He would buy them off. Why had he not thought of that sooner? He would attend to it at once.

His part of the plan worked beautifully. He rode up to the camp jauntily and smiling the smile that won men. He called out the paternal head of the family, apologized handsomely, admitted their rights, and named a sum for their prospective ownership that made the eyes of the man, who seemed in a receptive mood, brighten; when the same summons came from the tent door, and he again received a galvanic charge.

John expected a demand for a larger sum. Instead the camper struck an attitude, and in the most dignified tone he could command, announced that he and his family intended to leave the valley that very day, "An' not because they wuz bought out nuther, but because Sis, that is we-uns, we don't care tuh stay in no such neigh-

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borhood. An' as for takin' your pay, Sis, that is we-alls, we wouldn't tech it with no ten-foot pole."

In spite of himself, John blazed up afresh and said:

"You darned travesty of a man, next time I come to do business with you I'll call for 'Sis' in the first place." With which thrust John was obliged to content himself, and for the second time left in a discomposed and routed frame of mind.

The next day nothing remained of the campers but the smouldering embers of their fire. John heard of them as having "squatted" on "Three-Mile Flat," a locality some five miles down the same side of the river, where a scant amount of moisture made cultivation possible.

To John's credit be it said he felt a twinge of pity for the man who bore so plainly the stamp of "inefficient," trying in his weak way to wrest a living from the thirsty soil, and within a stone's throw of the unattainable volumes of water pouring down the Columbia.

The more he thought of it, the more he felt that it would salve his dignity and relieve his sympathies if he could do them some favor. So he sent his hired man off leading a young cow (valuable and scarce then), with a message to the effect that he felt indebted to them to that extent, and would they please accept with his compliments. Mr. Sibley, for that was his name, took her, dubiously, before consulting his family.

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Next morning when John got up, the cow was tied to his fence. He only ejaculated: "Its that Sis, blame such idiots!"

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CHAPTER III.

It was a month later that John saw a yellow cayuse, whose rider it puzzled him to identify, come loping up the valley. It was not a white man, an Indian nor a kloochman; and that exhausted the list of probabilities. Then it became clear that the doubtful head-gear was a sunbonnet and the rider a woman using a side-saddle.

"Holy smoke! It is a Sibley! To what am I indebted for this honor, I wonder?"

It was a Sibley, and Sis at that.

John made no move to assist her in alighting, but sat aloof waiting her approach.

It was like Sis, once there, to advance without apparent hesitation or timidity, although nothing short of a life and death matter to her would have brought her. Her shapely if roughened hands betrayed some nervousness as she fingered the birch switch she carried, but the sunbonnet (of the "slat" variety) presented an unmoved front.

Nearing John, but without looking up, she spoke; her voice unexpectedly soft and low; the lingo (a modification of her parents') something new to John. No manner of spelling conveys it, but the softness of the accents well nigh dis-

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pelled the shock from her rending of good English.

"Mistah Oswald," she began, "I ain't letting on I don't hate you, for I do; but our little Jim" (slightly tremolo) "is sick. Maw says that if he had somethin' to eat 'sides sech as we-alls have, he might get bettah. Could you" (decidedly smothery now) "sell Paw that cow? We kaint pay you now, but we shorely will," (desperate inflection).

For a moment the hands clasped and unclasped themselves in agitation over this self-imposed task, but the sunbonnet remained cool. Some illusion John had held about the age and temper of the speaker faded away at the girlish tones, and he mellowed up, as we all do, under the sensation of having a proud spirit humble itself before us.

"Have her? Why, of course, you can have her. Blamed nonsense that you haven't had her all this while. Come to think of it, you *can't* have her—that is, unless you promise to say no more about pay. That is how much I care for your—'hate' did you say, Miss—ah—Miss Sibley?"

"Paw will git huh" (loftily and no mention of thanks).

John's gallantry revived, and to the girl's discomfort he insisted on holding the cayuse by the bits while she mounted; a proceeding so unnecessary considering the starved and reluctant condition of the Sibley animals that spring, that

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he was to be suspected of wanting to catch a glimpse of the features inside the sunbonnet.

The Sibley family was of a class only comprehensible to the long-time Southerner. Others group all of the South's illiterates under the one head—"poor white trash"—but the understanding know that some unaccountably proud blood flows in the veins of families whose social status, if gauged by scholarliness, would be "nil."

From such an one came Mrs. Sibley. Once within the breastworks of a truly formidable family reserve, one found that Mrs. Sibley had wonderful qualities as a born hostess and mother, a conservator of hope and cheerfulness, and hearty friendliness that could win over even a critical grammarian and send him away thawed to the marrow. Poverty could not utterly dispel the comfort of a home where her geniality was the keynote. Even behind the rather high white forehead of "Paw" Sibley lay sensibilities along the line of morals and emotions that would dwarf by comparison those of many a shrewd and educated man of affairs.

Whatever misfortunes had followed them, one thing the Sibleys had accomplished that neither intellect, wealth nor education can knowingly do—they had produced in their offspring the physical combination called beauty, and the mental poise recognized as power.

Accounted for or not, there was Sis with a face and form to transfix the gaze of an artist; quick-witted, tender-hearted and bewitching. Pov-

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erty and a cramped life had left but superficial traces on a countenance of fascinating individuality. Her delicate features, topped by a mass of brown waviness, would have graced a more esthetic region than Three-Mile Flat. One wavy lock refused to lie with its mates and stubbornly dipped over her brow in a most coquettish manner. Mrs. Sibley was wont to account for it this way: "That's thuh Jamison cow-lick. It's bin croppin' out now an' then ever sence thuh name of Jamison crossed thuh fam'ly way back in Georgia."

Happenings that have to do with this story were at a standstill until mid-summer.

Mr. Sibley often repaired to the ferry for a little diversion and gossip, as the ferryman was his nearest neighbor and situated right in what might be considered the thick of public events in that region.

One evening as he returned from one of these visits, he set himself, as usual, a chair out under the hop-vine which Mrs. Sibley had coaxed into arbor-like appearance in front of their shack and lit his pipe. Mrs. Sibley desisted from watering the hollyhocks she had fenced away from the rapacious chickens, and came and sat herself down by Sis in the front doorway. The tangle of boys and hounds having been sent to a bearable distance, Mr. Sibley began to regale the womenfolk with his news items.

"Seems that thuh Grand Mogul has met up with a comedown." Grand Mogul was a title Mr. Sibley had felt moved to confer on John Oswald.

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"How's that, Paw," from both listeners.

"He's got his laig broke huntin' ovah them bluffs. Doctor's bin up tuh set it an' wuz jest ferryin' back when I wuz down thah."

"Broke his laig! An' nobody thah tuh do nothin' foh him but that onery half-breed," said Mrs. Sibley, showing that the feud-like hatred for John had undergone some modifications since the episode of the cow, which John had stoutly refused to be paid for.

"I'm feared that half-breed 'ull not treat him right," from Sis, revealed an unsuspected degree of interest on her part.

"Don't yuh worry none 'bout that, Sis. That half-breed's as skeart of John Oswald with all his laigs broke as you air of thuh ol' Nick."

As he spoke Mr. Sibley glanced reminiscently at the scenery as if he had some comprehensive recollections along that line himself. Then resumed:

"Hit's been uncommon hot to-day an' thuh man tuh thuh ferry says we kin look out foh thuh biggest rise in ten years, when thuh sun strikes that jag of snow onto thuh mountains. I reckon we bettuh git tuh town tuh-morrer, hadn't we, maw, 'fore thuh ferry quits?"

The river did rise in the night, and another hot day threatened, but the ferry was not discommoded, and Mr. and Mrs. Sibley, being inexperienced in the floods that come from hot sunshine, drove off early to town.

As Sis fetched the family water from the river during the day, she was alarmed at its

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rapid rise. By night the waters, liberated from the mountains some fifty miles away, came sweeping down in ever-increasing volumes. Anxiously the children sought the ferry, to find it moored helplessly on the other side.

This meant a night alone, which in itself had no terrors for this daughter of a hardy life. Once her brothers slept she wandered down to watch the swirling masses of debris and uprooted trees in the raging river. Surprised, she heard a galloping horse approaching. Instinctively she hid, then clearly recognized John Oswald's half-breed as he galloped past, bareheaded, his face atwist with malicious passion. A revolver glistened in his belt and he rode one of John's own horses.

As he swiftly disappeared, every faculty Sis had was strained to account for the incident. Her indignation swelled at the story her intuition supplied. Oswald down and helpless; some unreasonable anger of his, a cankering grudge in the heart of the half-breed; this his opportunity for revenge. Her only thought, at first, that he would steal and leave John helpless until some one chanced to come to his rescue. Then, with a shudder, came a more poignant thought. The flood! The exposed situation of John's house. Even now it must be threatened—perhaps destroyed. She shrank, cowering, from the quick following suggestions; she alone knew and could help, but how?

"Not a horse on thuh place. Five miles an' dark as Egup 'round that cultus trail. Dear God, I kaint!" was her first exclamation. Then

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one thought of lying helpless before the stealthy waters approach, blotted all disagreeable recollections and hesitation from the girl's mind, and "I must, I just shorely must!" came from her tense lips.

Awakening her eight-year-old brother, she gave him many injunctions to follow, "till sister comes back," and then slipped swiftly away in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

The distance was no real tax on this girl's strength, neither had she any of the sentimental fear of darkness to be expected of an ordinary miss; but there were real dangers and well she knew them. The dismal howl of a coyote was to her a reassuring sound, indicating the absence of possible larger and fiercer animals. But more than once, as she sped along, did she hear the tell-tale jingle of a disturbed rattler, an all too frequent pest in the vicinity at that time. Night and summer time were the normal seasons of their prevalence, and the flood had driven them from their rocky crevices in surprising numbers.

Even her stout little heart gave a few catching throbs as she neared the tunneled passageways through which she must trust her sense of direction to guide her, for on no account must she touch their ledgy sides, so likely a retreat for the reptiles; but she scarcely had entered their blackness before the cool night air from the other side greeted her and she was through and on. 'Once she paused, hopelessly trying to distinguish the outlines of field and flood in the valley below, then descending to its level, she neared her destination. Here a new obstacle confronted her. The irrigation ditch, swollen by back-water, spread half a hundred feet wide. But Sis had

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not crossed the continent in a mover's wagon without acquiring resources. Quickly stripping her clothing off she wrapped each garment around a stone, tossed them across, and, like the little athlete she was, swam easily after them, redressed and was again hurrying up the roadway toward the house. Once the river encroached upon her path and she made a wide detour to avoid it. The howling of John's dogs gave her an uneasy pang, prepared to face them if necessary though she was, but luckily they had been tied by the cunning half-breed for purposes of his own. She could now distinguish the outlines of the house, but there was neither light nor sound to reassure her. Then a new fear, a real gripping one, assailed her. It made her breath come in gasps. Why had she not thought before! Oswald was dead within! The half-breed had murdered him! She could scarcely restrain the impulse to run and crouch by the dogs—by anything that was alive!

It *was* pluck in a slip of a girl, but she steadied herself and walked straight through the gate and onto the porch; she rapped as briskly as a mid-day caller might have done, the while listening in an agony of tension.

What a heavenly sound, then, was the decidedly gruff "Who's there!" that followed. It was a pity that the cunning little gesture and soft laugh of relief Sis gave were lost on the unappreciative night. She stepped into the darkness inside and answered rather faintly:

"Its me, Sis Sibley."

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A pause; then,

"Well, ah, Miss Sibley, affairs in my household seem to be in such an unusual state that I am obliged to waive all ceremony in receiving you. I might add that I was not expecting callers, though I assure you I am glad to see you, or will be when I do. Would you mind stepping to this table and lighting a lamp which you will find there? You see I am disabled myself and that d—d man of mine has either been hurt himself or has decamped, and the devil seems to pay outside, though what is wrong I can't guess."

What with physical suffering, suspense and vexation, the day had been a wearisome one for John, though he was far from realizing what really did portend. Of a part with all the strangeness seemed the coming of this woman.

At first sight of her his serious mood underwent a comfortable reaction. He was genuinely amused. People who are familiar with the Arkansas backwoods customs will not be surprised that Sis wore the inevitable sunbonnet.

"Miss Sibley," said he, with a hovering smile, "won't you remove your *wraps*?"

If Sis noticed either his invitation or his ridicule, she gave no sign. Affairs of more consequence were uppermost in her mind.

"Mistah Oswald," her tone was solemn, "your man has gone an' left yuh, an' thuh river is floodin' an' is clean up tuh thuh door. I must loose them poor critters at thuh barn first, an' then you must tell me what I kin do foh you-all."

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John gave a piercingly astonished look at the—sunbonnet, and ejaculated something too expressive to be recorded here. As Sis stood, immovable, awaiting orders, he said:

“If you think you can, you may untie my horse, but I forbid you to molest the dogs. They would probably tear you to pieces.”

By the aid of a lantern Sis found her way to untie the frantic horse, which left his stall with a bound to seek the higher ground where the other stock had already gone; then she went deliberately and untied the dogs, who seemed to fawn thanks of deliverance, and then ran with glad barks to the porch where they vigorously shook their wet coats.

In such truly tyrannical manner had John grown to expect obedience, that he was smartly vexed, and when Sis presented herself for further orders, he said sternly:

“Woman, there is nothing you can do, nor nothing needing to be done. In my opinion” (very pompously) “you have over-estimated the danger. There is no reason to suppose that this house can really be threatened. I appreciate your efforts in my behalf” (very stiffly) “but it would be wise for you to compose yourself until such time as you feel that you must return,” (not quite an invitation to go).

Having delivered himself of this very warmly appreciative dissertation, John virtuously awaited the next move of the Sibley.

The girl held her head high as she thought for a moment, then said calmly:

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"Mistah Oswald, your boat is swept away. I thought you would tell me what tuh do tuh save us if thuh house goes too, but I kalkilate I must see things through by myself." With this she took the light and started out.

From John harshly: "What do you propose to do?"

"Try an' build a raft."

"You'll do nothing of the d—d sort!" (eyes steely and voice hissy.) "In the first place, it is not needed, and in the next place, there is not a suitable thing on the place to use for such a purpose. *You* build a raft!"

Sis had a temper that was scarcely proof against such unjust treatment, but she went coolly out into the adjoining room and commenced a search after various articles.

John boiled silently for a few moments, then remarked scathingly:

"I suppose impudence and bad manners from some sources no need to surprise one."

"Were *you* speaking of *mannahs*, Mr. Oswald?" said Sis from the doorway in a tone that carried volumes of meaning. And the barons began to realize the uselessness of blustering toward some people.

When Sis had gathered together hammer, nails, a clothesline and two planks, she took, one by one, three house doors from off their hinges, laid them on the porch convenient to John's window, and nailed them together securely. Fastening one end of the line to the doorknobs and one

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to a substantial nearby tree completed her operations. She then repaired to the kitchen, drew her wet feet up under her and sat shivering and waiting, not caring whether John was gnashing his teeth or amusing himself some other way.

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CHAPTER V.

Soon a long glistening streak crept in under the door. With fascinated interest the girl watched it extend itself, then spread gradually into pools. As she saw the floor about to vanish beneath the muddy waters it seemed the limit of what she could endure of lonely waiting, so she took the lamp and beat a hasty retreat to the room where John lay. The silent intruder was making headway there also, as the advent of the light revealed to John's sudden consternation. For a time he said nothing, nor the girl; though the rapid changes his countenance underwent bespoke a realization, at last, of the danger and of his helplessness. Then he asked, with a new shade of respect in his tones:

"How happened you to be here tonight?"

"I seen your man run off an' I was 'feared thuh flood would drowned yuh," replied Sis with her customary directness.

"Do you mean to say you rode from your place here, alone, because of that?"

"I walked."

"Walked! Dead Caesar's ghost! That was no joke."

Again silence, then John:

"Miss Sibley, (blessed if I know just how I ought to address you!) I feel that an apology

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is due you for what might have appeared like rudeness on my part. No doubt by now you think drowning is too good for me."

A light laugh, quickly caught and suppressed, was the girl's answer, then she ventured:

"My name is Drucilla, if you care tuh know."

"Drucilla, Drucilla Sibley," slowly repeated John as if struck with something euphonious in the name.

Confronting a situation such as faced these two is conducive to rapid acquaintance. In the phenomenally long few hours that followed, John found himself confiding to a Sibley such personal matters as that there was no one to care what accident might befall him, nor indeed if the Columbia should sweep him into the Pacific that very night; while in turn he got an insight into the strange childhood and girlhood of Sis; the years of poverty and drifting, with no school advantages other than that of a few months each out of two winters spent in Fayetteville.

Now and then John ventured a reassuring remark in the direction of her voice (and bonnet), to the effect that the flood must surely have reached its worst stage. Sis, as conscientiously tried to feel reassured. But no amount of juggling with conversation blinded them to the fact that the danger kept increasing.

John even asked anxiously if she had succeeded in constructing anything that she thought would float. She explained her crude preparations, and they lapsed into a silent vigil of such suspense that it was almost unendurable.

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Then the spell was broken! The house gave a sickening floating motion. With one bound of terror the over-wrought and exhausted girl sprang toward John and frantically clutched his arm as she cried in a passion of nervous fright:

"Oh! Mistah Oswald, I'm so 'feared, an' so cold an' so tired, just let me touch you, won't you please?"

Sis had always had Mrs. Sibley's ample and reassuring bosom to flee to in times of stress, and for the moment was a very child in fear and helplessness.

With shame we must record that John's first impulse was to repulse such unwarranted familiarity, especially upon the part of a Sibley, but, at this critical moment the hitherto faithful sunbonnet had tumbled back unheeded, and John found himself gazing at close range into as lovely, if pale and tearful, a face as he had ever seen.

Here was a situation for the totally unprepared John in which his calloused emotions had to give way to some lively adjusting. Surprise at the butterfly which had emerged from the sunbonnet chrysalis was uppermost. The novelty of having a human being dare approach him came next, and was no less interesting by reason of its being a pretty woman in distress. Unwonted thrills that might have been awakening chivalry, or long dormant impulses of tenderness, ruffled his serenity. The memory of his last caresses, a mother's, came vaguely to him. Some intense grief over the pity of his long repressed affec-

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tions seemed to catch momentarily at his consciousness. Floods were forgotten in this moment of introspection.

A repressed sob from the girl renewed the present, and he laid his hand gently on her head, saying:

"Little girl, don't be afraid; we will see this thing safely through yet," a very creditable attempt at comforting for the baronly unaccustomedness. With her face in a convenient pillow Sis sobbed convulsively.

We suspect now that Cupid has command of the elements to further his plans, for having used the flood to bring affairs up to this climax, he allowed it to subside.

John's happy ejaculation, "Jove! I believe I can see more of that chair than I could a few moments ago!" aroused the girl.

She raised her woe-begone face, saw that he was right, and gave way to real girlish impulses of delight. She patted John's hand, clasped her own excitedly and pressed her face to the windowpane, eagerly seeking the coming of daylight. And come it did very soon, revealing a most prosaic state of mud-disfigured surroundings.

With assured safety came much of their former reserve, and Sis would have been glad to don her sunbonnet if John had not purposely, or otherwise, laid it behind him. At one time he would have considered the tongs the only proper thing with which to handle a Sibley garment.

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Continued glances at the head the bonnet had sheltered were rapidly dispelling that point of view.

Sis prepared some acceptable toast and coffee, and a short time thereafter no less a person appeared on the scene than Mr. Sibley; the very widening of the river below the narrows having made rowing across it easier than usual.

So, leaving the invalid to the doubtful tenderness of "Paw Sibley," Sis hastened home to the comforting arms of "one who would appreciate that she had gone five miles alone in the dark through dangers, and would give her a word of praise," as Sis said to herself with an aggrieved sigh, though for some reason a blush hid very near the sigh.

After his recovery, John made several attempts to see Sis and formally thank her. He was puzzled to know why he never found her on any of these occasions. He was no more puzzled than poor Sis would have been if called upon to explain what impulse sent her scurrying to the fields every time John's saddler was seen approaching. "Paw" and "Maw" had their perplexities too, these days, because of the new sensitiveness Sis exhibited to all the Sibley deficiencies, and her unwonted longings "for things like other girls." Her merry-hearted mischief seemed suddenly to have given place to a patient and painstaking devotion to the home folks and duty. In short Cupid had touched a young girl's imagination and another hero was born.

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Even John Oswald showed "symptoms" understood by the wily fellow, who no doubt went on to other scenes, knowing full well that his arrow-spiced virus would "take" in due time.

For some reason John's previous plans and purposes seemed as out of date as if blocked out for a stranger, and to which to try and reconcile himself, was to be interrupted by irrelevant recollections of a girl's tear-stained face and soft touch; while letters from the New York aunt, urging the date of his arrival, made John so cross that his new helpers, a man and his wife, could hardly endure him.

One can follow a worse guide than the genuine little Cupid, no matter how impractical he may seem. Perhaps he sees things not apparent on the surface; for instance that John needed a little leveling down to the average humanity before he should be quite the man he might be; or, he knew that Sis, barring little trips in grammar, and things superficial and to be overcome, was John's equal. Perhaps he foresaw how the meek adoration of Paw Sibley and the homely affectionate atmosphere surrounding Maw Sibley would supply in John's future something sadly lacking in his past. John may have been dimly conscious of such subjective suggestions himself, but it needed one more circumstance to jog the baronly vanity "out of the common time into the salute."

As John was returning from Wenatchee one day, he was overtaken by another horseman whom he recognized as the dashing and sporty

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proprietor of the new hotel at that place. In an overly familiar manner, he confided to John his errand. It was to find old man Sibley, "who has a girl, an uncommon peachy looker, and I'm going to persuade that girl to come to work at my hotel. Girls is scarce and high and I happen to know the old man is down on his finances; anyway I'm going to make it worth that girl's while," and here he tipped John a sly wink.

John turned livid and raised his riding whip, but reason prevailed, and he only brought it down on his own horse, which was off like the wind.

"That's blamed queer; wonder if he's got designs on that girl himself," was the man's surprised comment.

John rode that gait the several miles home, then turned and rode as rapidly back again. In the meantime he was coming round to one of his lightning-like conclusions. He recalled and bade a last farewell to "Mrs. John Oswald, late of New York." He even considered a few remembered arguments against marriages between people of different social environments and attainments. Some way the color of eyes, the balancing of wills, and even the tones of a voice seemed confusingly prominent in the attempt to weigh the matter coolly.

As he passed over the narrow trail, the thought of a girl crossing it alone and in the night to come to his aid seemed to clinch matters, and one near might have heard him say, forcibly:

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"Dang it, a fellow wants what he wants, don't he, and that settles it." Then he remembered the jaunty stranger and rode the harder.

Around the Sibley home an air of excitement was still apparent. Paw Sibley, looking almost as fierce as some of his Kentucky cousins, still held his shotgun, while he and Maw Sibley exchanged scathingly indignant remarks to nobody but the awe-struck boys. Sis had fled upon seeing John.

The Sibley vocabulary was taxed while Paw and Maw tried to tell how the name of Sibley and Jamison had been insulted right at their door.

"There ain't never been a Sibley nor a Jamison 'hire out' to nobody" ("nor never shall," broke in Mr. Sibley.) "They owned their own niggers too, an' here comes this pisen Yankee talkin' tuh *our Sis* 'bout hirin'," and Mrs. Sibley wiped her eyes as she continued, "Thuh hardest part fur Paw an' me wuz havin' Sis speak up an' say she thought 'twas time we quit talkin' 'bout the Jamison an' Sibley niggers an' let her go tuh work. She says she kaint bear tuh see Paw work no harder an' he kaint make no livin' here."

Leaving Mr. and Mrs. Sibley groaning over this unexpected degeneracy in the "apple of their eye," John suddenly stepped inside.

There sat Sis looking miserable indeed. For the first time her parents had disapproved of "we-all, that is, Sis." Deep humiliation at all these reminders of their poverty lowered her head. She was altogether crestfallen and conquerable. John was correspondingly positive,

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so it came about with shocking suddenness that John was holding the trembling girl, new pink calico and all, in his arms, and pouring out plans by which Mr. and Mrs. Sibley should live comfortably on the strip, and *she*—quite as comfortable—with him!

When Paw and Maw stepped inside and beheld their Sis in the arms of “the grand mogul,” not having had any “soul interchange” to prepare them, they stood in rank amazement, all of which John was oblivious to until the youngest Sibley shouted: “Paw air yuh goin’ tuh draw yer gun on that one too?”

Some days later John started the following letter eastward:

“My Dear Aunt:

“You may expect me in New York the first of the month. I am coming after an educated and refined woman, yes! as a companion, certainly! but for my wife!—as lovely and sweet a girl as was ever made. Some day soon I shall present her to you, as we shall spend the season in your city.

“Dear aunt, I have found that it is not essential in an agreeable companion that she shall be a counterpart of one’s self in book learning; instead I find it very agreeable to be the first to unfold these things to a fresh and appreciative mind.

“I make a fair task master considering that I am utterly unable to intimidate my pupil by any means what-some-never.

“Your enthusiastic nephew,

“JOHN OSWALD.”

Under the Tricolor

BY

FRANCES K. BYERS

Under the Tricolor

I WONDER what can be the matter with my wheel. I almost believe it is bewitched, and the thread, too, for not one smooth skein have I spun today."

There was an angry snarl, the thread snapped, and Frau Lenz pushed the wheel impatiently from her and walked to the window.

"*Ach!*" she murmured, "it is not the fault of my faithful wheel, but of my own heart—dark and tumultuous it is, like the Rhine itself, today. And how can I spin when my eyes are blurred with tears? Never did I, nor my mothers before me, shrink from giving our best, yes, our all, in defense of our Fatherland and our rightful king! But when I think of my husband in the ranks of the usurper, forced to fight against Russia who is our friend—perhaps lying wounded and frozen upon a battlefield—and my son, my happy little Fritz"—

Down the street came the clatter of wooden shoes. The children were coming from school.

"*Mein lieblich,*" she said tenderly, caressing Hanschen, the youngest, who hurried to her and buried his face in the folds of her skirts, "starved as usual, is it not so? But where," she asked,

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pausing before the crane, kettle in hand, "where is thy brother Karl? It grows late, and he should have been at home this half hour."

She cast a quick apprehensive glance at the door, which burst open a moment later, and Karl stood before her.

"Mother," he said, when he had recovered his breath, "I saw a great mass of people around the fountain, so I went too. A rider, whose horse's muzzle was white with foam, was reading a paper. I could not understand what he said, but the crowd cheered until the gendarme galloped up and scattered them, commanding them in the name of the King to go home."

"It is Frederick William's proclamation," said Frau Goetz, their neighbor, who, in the excitement, had entered without the formality of knocking. "Here I have a copy of it in my pocket. Take it—or let me read it aloud, so that all may hear."

Tears often choked her utterance and her audience hung on each word of the long-hoped-for proclamation of their beloved king, which declared that the decisive moment had at last arrived, and exhorted all his loyal subjects—Brandenburgians, Prussians, Silicians, all who call themselves German—to remember the history of their past, to remember the noble Elector, to remember the great and victorious Frederick and the achievements of their common ancestors, and above all to remember the past seven years of war and desolation; impressing upon them that by reason of these memories no

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sacrifice could be too great for the King and Fatherland.

"Now, God be thanked!" broke in the old grandfather, rising from his seat by the fireside and letting his pipe fall to the floor. His eyes flashed, and he stood before them, not the infirm cripple, who, as he often bitterly said, was only fit to do the tasks of an old woman, but again the stout hussar, ready to follow Father Blucher into hell itself.

"*Ach!*" he groaned, sinking into a chair, "if it were not for that accursed bullet—but go on, I must hear it all."

"We must fight and conquer," she continued, "if we do not wish to cease being Prussians and Germans. It is our last decisive effort for existence. There is no other issue than an honorable peace, or a glorious overthrow. God and the right will make us victorious!"

"Amen!" said the old man devoutly, and all in the room echoed the word.

"The king says great sacrifices will be required," said Frau Lenz sadly. "Alas! we have nothing to give. We can furnish no soldiers, and all has been taken from us; even our last cow was taken away yesterday.

"Here is something," said Frau Goetz, pointing to the shining pewter dishes on the dresser.

"But of what use would they be to the King?" asked Frau Lenz, wonderingly.

"Bullets," answered the other woman stoutly. "And," she continued, "I still have something to show thee—these!"

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Drawing a box from her pocket she showed her astonished friends a dozen or more iron rings, shaped like wedding rings and engraved on the inside with the words, "I Gave Gold for Iron—1813,"

"These were brought me from Berlin," she went on, "by the same courier who brought us the news. My friend the silversmith sent them. By royal authority he has made ten thousand of the rings, and has addressed a request to all patriots, especially all married women and betrothed maidens, to bring their gold rings and receive the iron ones in exchange."

Without a moment's hesitation, Frau Lenz drew her wedding ring from her finger, and, pausing only to press it to her lips and to read for the last time the names inside, "Ludwig and Frederika, 20th June, 1790," laid it in the open hand of her friend.

"Heart's treasure, farewell," she murmured softly. "Long years of service have proven thee pure gold, like the heart of him who put thee on my finger."

"*Ach!*" exclaimed Amelia, impulsively, pressing forward, "if only I, too, could have a ring! But I have none to give in exchange."

"See," said Frau Goetz, throwing back her close-fitting hood. They saw that the shining braids which had been her pride were gone.

"Thank you, Frau Goetz!" cried Amelia, "I, also, will give my gold to the King, and you shall make me a hood."

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Swiftly she ran to a work-basket and came back with a heavy pair of shears which she handed to Frau Goetz. In a twinkling the two glittering yellow braids lay in that good woman's lap.

At that moment heavy footsteps were heard without, hurrying toward the house, and the girl caught up a kerchief to cover her shorn locks. Frau Lenz hastened to the door, but before she could fasten the bolt it flew open and two tall soldiers, wearing the Emperor's uniform, stood before her.

"Sirs," she demanded sternly, "by what right do you so brutally invade my home? My God!" she cried, as the foremost pushed back his hat and advanced into the room, "can it be?—yes, it is Fritz, my dear, dear son!"

"No, no, *mutterchen*," said Fritz, brushing away his own tears, "this is not the time for crying. Why, this is the happiest day of my life, for have I not escaped from the service of the man whom I hate more ardently than I love my own life, and am well on my way to become one of Von Lutzow's riflemen? So another kiss, dear heart, and I am off. But God forgive me!" he cried, as he suddenly recollected his friend. "Mother, sister, have you no greeting for Franz Werther, the truest friend man ever had? Thank God, who made his legs so long, else I should now be at the bottom of the river! It is swollen from the heavy rains, and swimming against the swift current had exhausted my strength, when his feet touched bottom and he dragged me to the shore."

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"God bless you, my son!" exclaimed the mother, impulsively clasping the tall Westphalian to her heart and kissing him on both cheeks.

"Wait," she said, detaining them; "I could not think of sending soldiers so poorly equipped. I have provided something against this day."

She cautiously bolted the door. Under her direction the flagstone in front of the hearth was raised, and from her store, hidden there, she chose two new suits of homespun.

"Now, off with those rags," she commanded, "for they hurt my eyes, and while you are about it I will make you some coffee. Then you will be able to travel twice as fast."

While Fritz was taking leave of his mother and grandfather, his friend stood looking admiringly at the severed hair that still lay on the bench where Frau Goetz had laid it.

"*Fraulein*," said he, "God grant great hearts to us men that we may be worthy of our heroic women!" He drew a tiny tress from one of the braids. "*Fraulein*," he entreated, "will you not give this little lock to me?"

She flushed and shook her head. "No," she answered, "we German maidens do not give our hair to strangers."

"But, *Fraulein*," he persisted, "you are giving all of yours to the King, whom you have never seen, while I have had the happiness of your acquaintance for a blessed half-hour."

She stood with averted head, her hand held out for the tress of hair, which he still withheld.

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"Dear *Fraulein*," he said pleadingly, "it is the old story of the Rhine maiden, and I am entangled in the meshes of her hair, which will hold me forever by her side, if she does not let go."

She caught her brother's questioning eye, impatient to be gone.

"Yes, take it," she faltered, "take it and go."

* * * * *

Blucher commanded the Prussian army—Blucher, who had sworn every day since Jena and Tilsit that he would not sheathe his sword until he had driven Napoleon beyond the Rhine, and when he took command declared that for them there could be no retreat. Joyfully all the able-bodied men who called themselves German hastened as one man to Berlin, and, while the streets were ringing with the martial strains of Fouque and Korner, enlisted under their beloved old general. With a confidence that never wavered, they followed their impetuous leader through days of success and days of gloom and disaster; onward like the rising of the ocean's tide, until they stood with him upon the heights of Montmartre and beheld Paris at their feet.

The lot of the women, left at home, was no less arduous than that of the men, and animated by an equal enthusiasm they made themselves the base of supplies for the soldiers, whose patriotism, however great, must have food and clothing to keep it alive. True, friend and foe alike had depleted their possessions, but in their rich fields, their strong arms and their skillful fingers, lay always the possibilities of more.

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They toiled, these women, not to the beat of drum and call of bugle, but to the music of their folk-songs, and clung to their homes until a courier startled them with the news of Napoleon's retreat toward the Rhine.

They then fled from their home, and it was only when the enemy had been driven beyond the Rhine that, with glad and thankful hearts, they retraced their way.

At times they traveled along roads broken and strewn with debris; at other times through fair country lanes bordered by whitening hawthorn, wherein nature herself seemed to rejoice in the new dispensation. At last, with tear-dimmed eyes, they beheld their beloved Rhine.

"My daughter," entreated the elder woman, "your eyes are younger and stronger than mine. Try if you can see the chimneys or at least the church-spire of our dear village."

Amelia looked long and earnestly. "No," she said at last, "it must be the mist from the river, for I can see nothing."

"Ah, well," said the mother, stifling a sigh, "what matter a few minutes, when we know that to-night we shall rest again in our own home!"

Slowly a blur grew through the mist, took shape, and became trees, stone walls and chimneys. With fast-beating hearts the women alighted from the traveling-vehicle and turned up the well-remembered road toward home. But scarcely had they walked twenty yards when cries of anguish burst from their lips. There was neither

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light nor warmth in the village houses—nothing but blackened walls and ruined hearths.

Napoleon had passed before them!

Frau Lenz was exhausted by the vigils of the past months, her nerves shattered by their horrors, and only the thought of home and a reunited family had sustained her during the fatigue of the long journey. She sank lifeless on the doorstone of her old home, at the feet of the husband who had returned one moment too late to save her.

* * * * *

Two days later, and the beloved clay had been consigned to its last rest in the poor trampled little churchyard. Lenz and his father walked slowly through the village streets.

"I have brought you here," he said to the old man, as they seated themselves on the broken wall of the village fountain, "to hold a council of war. Often I have heard my old General voice his contempt for the man who is crushed by misfortune, and I feel that even in sorrow, such as ours, we must not forget that we are brave men. During my campaign I have heard much about America, and many of our friends are going there. Our work here is done; our old home is no more. I have not the heart to build another on its site, but if we can establish one across the sea it will mean the beginning of a new life—for the children at least."

The veteran entered with enthusiasm into the project, and when it was imparted to Amelia and the boys they joyfully acquiesced. But no

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news had as yet come from Fritz; and Amelia, thinking of the soldier friend as well as of her brother, pleaded for delay.

"But if he comes the pastor will give him all necessary information," answered her father, "and you may be sure that he will soon follow us."

Accordingly, they collected their few belongings. The two men procured some carpenter's tools, and from the blasted trunk of an aged cherry tree that had been the special favorite of the dead wife, fashioned a sea-chest.

"Wait," cried Karl, "I think of something else—we have forgotten the things under the kitchen floor."

They followed his eager footsteps and soon had the ashes and fallen timbers cleared from the floor and the carefully concealed treasures uncovered.

For the first time the bereaved husband gave way to his grief, as with trembling hands he transferred to the new chest the relics his wife had cherished for so many years.

"We will not look at them now," he said, "but our new home will seem the sweeter to us because of them."

The last article was being deposited in the chest when there sounded from the door the name "Amelia!"

The girl raised her tear-wet eyes, and recognized in the tall, bearded soldier, who hastened eagerly toward her, her brother's friend, Franz

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Werther. Her heart sank when she saw that he was alone.

“Where”—she faltered—“where is my brother?”

“Fritz sent me ahead to tell you that he will soon be here,” he answered.

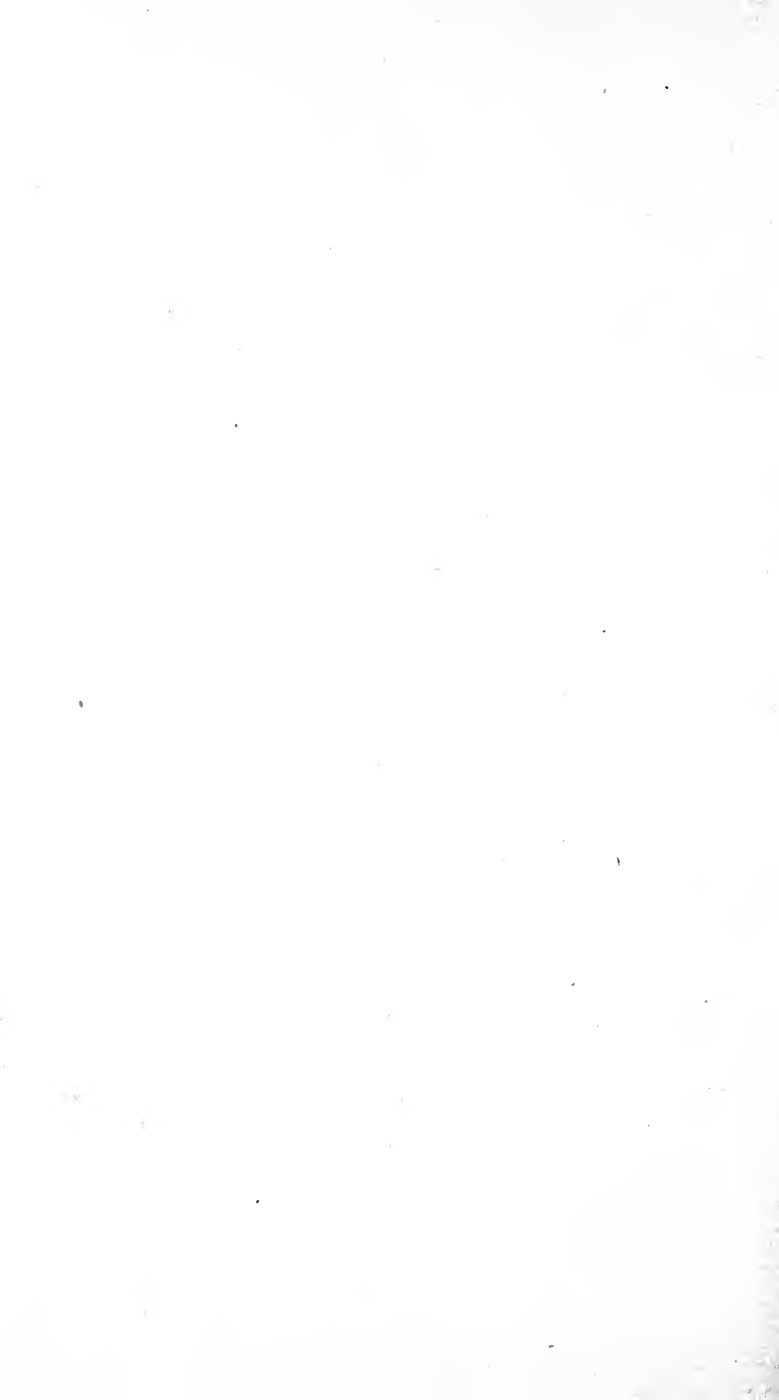
In the midst of the joyous exclamations he gently drew the girl a little aside. Taking out his pocket Bible he opened it and revealed a lock of golden hair.

“See,” he said, softly, “the hair of the Rhine maiden!—and it has brought me back to you!”

A Maker of Violins

BY

KATHRYNE WILSON





A Maker of Violins

CAUGHT in a draught of sea-air, the fog curtain of nightfall curled outward, and swinging over the waters of the Sound, folded itself above the swaying ships, shadowy wharves and gloomy warehouses of the waterfront, and lifted to wind about the terracing hills of the Bay City. Here a stronger gust bore an edge of the gray mantle still higher, only to flap it idly around the steeple of an old abandoned church, where one corner, blowing into the window of the bell-tower, brushed the seamed face of a stubby little man who sat on a chest,

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rubbing vigorously with the palm of his hand the curved sides of a violin.

A beautifully formed creature was this that he held, with perfect poise of sloping shoulders, its bosom rounding beneath the dusky satin skin, the slender throat curved just enough to bear gracefully the proud lift of the head—a figure lacking but a touch of its creator to render it a tremulous, sentient thing, with a voice to set one's soul to dreaming.

The little man lifted it high before him, and regarded it proudly, tenderly.

"Thou art all but perfect, *liebchen*," he murmured, in German, "at last I have done all I can for thee. Tomorrow—"

A step echoed through the deserted hall back of the tower, and with a whisk the violin disappeared into the chest. The nimble old hands were busy with a bit of unfinished maple when the door was flung open and there burst into the litter of the eight-by-nine cubbyhole a pair of broad shoulders supporting a shock-head of black hair, and a face lined with struggle, rather than years, but now exuberantly radiant.

"Friebel, Friebel!" cried the impetuous visitor, "such a joy have I had, such a happiness! I came at once to tell you—I could not wait—I—"

With a sweep of his arm the old man made a place for the new-comer to sit.

"A joy, Kulik?" he said, simply, looking over his spectacles, "I am glad."

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"Ach, but let me tell you," exclaimed the other, rapping the door-sill impatiently in the excess of his enthusiasm. "The Virtuoso—the great Hungarian Virtuoso—who plays in recital at the *Metropole* tomorrow night—he is today in the city—I have seen him, and—he is my old friend! The name he bears is strange to me, but I met him by chance and I recognized him, though it has been ten years since we were together at the academy at Budapest. I have come but now from a visit with him. Ah!" he mused gazing unseeingly at the piece of wood in the old man's hands, "to see him once more, to talk of the fatherland, of music, of old dreams, to *live* again for the moment!"

Recalled presently by a movement, he dropped obediently into the chair prepared for him. "Such a happiness it was, Friebe!" he said, with a little sigh, "but this will please *you* to know: the Virtuoso—he has a Cremona—"

"A Cremona!" The little man let his hands fall on his knees and gazed up at the other in a hungry kind of way. "A Cremona!" he repeated, almost in a whisper.

"*Ja, wohl,*" answered Kulik, eagerly, "and, Friebe, I—I have played it!" The big fellow's voice caught somewhere and refused for the moment to serve him. "The Virtuoso would know how I played, and he thrust the treasure into my hands. I—to play a Cremona! It was the moment of my life, my friend, and I played as I never thought I could play. At the time, nothing was there but that which I should have been

—and the Cremona. All the possibilities of the lost years—I cried them out in my music. And when I had finished, the Virtuoso was weeping. “Why are you lost away out here at this land’s end of the West, Kulik?” he asked me. “What have you done?”

“And then I told him the wretched story. Of what use is genius when it must grovel for sticks to keep the pot boiling? What would you, when to feed one’s body is to starve one’s soul? An orchestra leader in a melodrama theater, I, who ten years ago had a future no less than he! But for him—help, money—for me, my fingers and a bauble of wood and catgut. Even a genius cannot make music on an old shoe!

“Friebel, it rent me in a thousand pieces to tell him. But he was kind! He shook me by the shoulders. He berated me for not letting him know, cursed my miserable pride, demanded what right I had to deny him a chance to serve his art. And I—I laughed. I could not have borne his pity.

“And so I have this to tell you: to-morrow I go away to study, to work, to live. He will help me, and one day I will make him glad. But to-morrow—I go to Vienna.”

On the last word he stammered a little, and his hands took to fumbling, in his awkwardness, with a bit of shaving picked up from the chest where Friebel sat. In the silence that followed, the two friends avoided each other’s eyes.

It was Friebel who bridged the gap. “To have found a friend,” he mused, softly, after a

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moment, "and to have played a Cremona! It is enough for a life-time." Leaning forward, he stretched out his hand, and the two gripped in a silent sympathy.

Outside, the desolate tooting of fog-whistles from isolated boats in the harbor was borne up the heights with the coughing of engines in the railroad yards, the clang of street-car bells, the rattle of the passing cable in its socket, the clatter of feet on the pavement and the raucous shouts of voices below. Just without the window, a garishly gilded violin swung creakily from the casement, the only sign to an indifferent world of the humble violin-maker within, drudging alone, day by day, in his gloomy little cell, where now the flickering saffron light from the oil-lamp cast weird, incongruous shadows—a pitifully lonely, joyless place to bury a life in—life that held so many possibilities, so many beautiful compensations!

All at once, Kulik burst out, protestingly.

"The whole long day and late at night do you sit here in your musty tower like an owl, Friebe! Always these horrible noises about you—the clash, shriek, rattle, clang of the city—none but ugly sounds to hear. How can you bear it?"

"I do not hear it, Kulik. I am too busy."

"That is it! Too busy—always too busy—and all around you hammers and files, chisels and glue, strings and skeletons of fiddles—never a beautiful thing to look upon!"

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The violin-maker smiled to himself, and bent over to close the window, shutting out the blare of noises.

"Tell me—about the Cremona," he said, tentatively. "How does she look? Like what is her voice?"

"Ah, Friebel, a fairy, a sylph! She is exquisite as a sea-shell, with the voice of a Lorelei! If you could but see her, hear her!"

"Yes," murmured Friebel, softly, "yes!" And his busy hands fell inert once more. Over his mind flashed a thought of the prohibitive fee for the recital to-morrow night—prohibitive even for a remote gallery seat where the sound is all but inaudible—the sound that he yearned to hear—the tone of a Cremona.

Kulik looked up quickly at the inarticulate whisper and caught the eager, wistful smile. For a moment he gazed upon the bent figure, the grizzled head, the dream-set eyes—then he was on his feet, pacing feverishly the limits of the crowded room. When he presently stood before the little man—it was with the air of having made a great discovery.

"Look, Friebel," he cried, eagerly, "I have a plan. To-night, as you know, my poor melodrama theatre over the way is to see the appearance of a great actress, all the better houses being taken. For the occasion we have been practicing the music these many days—*Wilhelm Tell*, a Beethoven *Sonata*, a Mozart *Caprice*, *Cavalleria*—a rare feast for ragtime ballad-players!

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"Now, this night you shall come to the theatre with me—you shall sit near where you can hear the Cremona—for I will ask the Virtuoso to lend it to me. For once you shall know what it is to look upon a beautiful thing, to hear a siren song. For once you shall feast your soul."

Already he was at the door, but Friebe caught him by the arm. "Kulik!" he commanded the other, as he would a child, "come back. You must not ask so much."

But he was shaken off. "I ask not for myself—I ask for you—and it is nothing, this last night. He will trust me with it, and you shall hear the Cremona."

Without further parleying, he dashed away through the gaping hall, leaving the old man in the doorway, helpless, in a storm of protest. Only Friebe knew what it would cost the pride of his friend to ask so much; only Friebe knew how to repay it.

Shuffling back into the room, he bent over the chest and lifted the hidden violin from its case. Mechanically he stroked its throat. To be so near—to see, to hear, perhaps to touch a Cremona—after all these years—at last to be able to prove—with a sudden emotion he stared down at the object in his hands. An impulse had seized him.

"*Liebchen*," he muttered, under his breath, "*you* shall hear, too! We will go together, you and I. You shall see what it is to be a Cremona, *kleine*, for the good of your soul. You would like to go—yes?" The question was put mis-

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chievously as to a child whose delight were unquestionable.

"But you are not in proper dress, *liebchen*," he protested, whimsically. "You must be perfectly adorned for the theatre. Let us see—let us—see—"

From a drawer he took out a bundle of strings and infinite pains were exercised in the selection of four. These fastened in place, adjusted to the bridge and thrummed into tune, he took from its hook a slender bow, lifted the instrument to his breast, and touched it into life.

"You would like to go, little Crema?" he teased. "Then tell me how much."

Softly, quaveringly, the spirit of the violin murmured in his ear; plaintively, appealingly, it besought the heart of its maker. And while it spoke, the gray head drooped toward the trembling form, lower and lower, until the furrowed cheek rested against the satiny body. Then with tears on his lashes, little Friebe! pressed tremulous lips to his treasure. "Twenty years," he whispered, brokenly, "twenty years!"

When, later, Friebe! took his chair near Kulik, in the shadow of the footlights, there was all about him the bewilderment of unwonted things. Dazzle of myriad light bulbs, flare of lavish gilding and gaudy trappings, glare of exit signs above narrow doorways, rustle of skirts, thump of lowered seats, murmur of babbling voices and a sea of faces billowing above him—he was engulfed in a flood of light, and color, and sound.

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But to him it was all as nothing. Every sense of sight and hearing was focused upon the chestnut-hued, slenderly graceful thing that the leader was holding reverently in the full glare of light.

Kulik flashed him a radiant look. "Is she not a beauty, a sprite?" it seemed to say, and the violin-maker, after a hungry, absorbing gaze, took a deep breath, and smiled.

"Beautiful, yes," he answered to himself, "elfin, yes. But so is—"

A wave of sound drowned his half-spoken words, and the orchestra was launched upon the full tide of the overture to *Wilhelm Tell*. It had been long since the old German had had an opportunity to disport himself in such a flood of harmony as poured about him now, and yet he was unconscious at first of anything but the nearness of a life-long yearning about to be gratified.

Eager with expectancy for the first note, his keen ear caught it as it trembled from the Cremona—a note whose ravishing, mellow richness, whose throbbing resonance he had heard equaled—*once*; a note in whose depths were lost in a moment all the doubts of twenty years. At the moment of his greatest pain little Friebe! was triumphantly happy. His Crema was vindicated!

This was what he had waited for—what he had longed for—what he had prayed for—to hear the tone of a Cremona, that he might compare with it the tone of his Crema—that he might

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vindicate his own. Now, he could listen sanely—could drink in thirstily the limpid ripples of exquisite melody that flowed around him. But always, as he listened, his fingers stroked the curved throat of the violin lying in its open case upon his knee. “You are hearing a Cremona, *liebchen*,” he whispered once, “but thou hast a voice as sweet—thou hast a voice as sweet!”

It was in an interval between the acts, when Kulik rested the Cremona on the rack for a moment, that the idea came to him, and then with the force of a blow. For an instant he seemed to become deaf and dumb and blind. But with the clearing of his senses, the thought lost its stunning power. To—be—sure—to prove by some one else—to make the test a perfect one—there could be no wrong? Even as he weighed it the opportunity seemed strangely to favor him; the lights in the house went out for the rise of the curtain. On the impulse Friebe acted.

A stoop, a click, a turn of the wrist, and the Cremona slept in the box beneath his hand. A slide, and the Crema lay on the rack. When the lights from the stage flashed out on them, Friebe sat quietly as before, but he was conscious that his hands twitched nervously.

In an ache of suspense, he watched the preparation for the next number. His music arranged, the leader took up the violin, picking the strings tentatively. A little matter of tuning seemed to annoy him, and for the moment Friebe hardly dared to breathe. But in harmony again at once, Kulik looked up for a compan-

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ionable smile, raised the instrument and gave the signal to play. At the movement, Friebe! relaxed in his chair, and his lips moved noiselessly.

It was the Beethoven *Sonata* now, and the first violin was given every opportunity in the complicated movements that followed. As if inspired by an unseen presence, Kulik seemed to lose himself in a kind of communion. He kissed the strings with his bow, he caressed the swan-throat with trembling fingers, he seemed intoxicated with the instrument's very nearness. On and on he played, ecstatically, rapturously, and when the sonata came to a close with the stately tread of a minuet, Kulik bore the look of one who had trod the measure with Saint Cecilia herself.

And hungrily Friebe!'s eyes devoured him, losing not a single evidence of the delight in which the player reveled, gloating over the joy of his victory. For the great, beautiful truth that loomed up before Friebe! was this: that through it all Kulik did not know it was not the Cremona he held to his cheek. The violin-maker hugged himself in the triumph of it. Kulik did not know!

At the end of the play, Friebe! groped out through the gloom of the passage ahead of the violinist, and led the way across through the haze of the street. Once within the work-shop, and the flickering lamp lighted, he turned to his companion.

"Now you may give me my violin, Kulik," he observed.

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The young man stared, then smiled, leniently. "You have it in your hand," he said.

"Ah, so? I am not so sure," mused the little man, "but look and see."

"I have the Cremona, Friebe!, as you know," expostulated Kulik, but he began fumbling indulgently at the catch while he spoke. Stooping to lift the violin from its case, he held it up convincingly to the feeble light, as he added: "See! Of course I have not yours. This is the—" Suddenly bending closer, he turned the instrument about, uttered a low cry, and grew white.

"The Cremona—where is it? This is not it! Where is it?" and he stared wildly about him.

"It is here," Friebe! hastened to assure him. "I have it."

"You! How did you come by it? Have I been out of my senses?"

The violin-maker explained in a word the substitution. "And you knew it not, Kulik," he exclaimed, fairly gurgling in his glee, "you knew it not!"

His victim regarded him ruefully, half angrily. "It was a poor joke to play upon me, Friebe!," was his comment. "But," with sudden recollection, "what, then, is this one that I have played all evening, this with the marvelous tone, this that has gripped my very soul to-night?"

"It is mine, Kulik. I made it. It has taken me twenty years, but it is worth the while. You knew it not from the Cremona."

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The player seized him, almost roughly, by the shoulder.

"You tell me that you have made a violin that one cannot tell from a Cremona? It is impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible to patience and faith, boy," said the other, in gentle reproof. "Of a labor of love it came. When Elspeth died, and the child, it was all that was left me. Into it have gone the joys of twenty years. The trick—it was but to prove my little Crema, Kulik! For her sake, you will forgive?"

Impulsively the younger man took the hand of the older in both his own. "Forgive? I rejoice for you! Now you need not work so hard. Your fortune is made. The instrument will bring you hundreds—perhaps a thousand dollars."

Friebel sprang to his feet. "What?" he cried, in indignation, "sell her, my beautiful Crema, I, who have watched her grow for twenty years? Could I be so cruel to the *liebchen*?" In a passion of jealousy, he snatched the violin to him.

"But a rest, Friebel—"

"Rest? And give up the joy of my work? Can *you* say this, Kulik?"

"Ah, no, no!" the other hastened in his penitence to protest. "You see what this life-struggle has done to me! No, I understand. It is all we have—the work!" As he spoke, he was gazing admiringly, thoughtfully at the instrument in the maker's hands. "Twenty years!" he marveled. "It is not too long! To create a perfect,

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a beautiful thing—can there be a greater joy than that?"

The maker of violins took an eager step toward him, and held out his hands, his face illumined.

"But yes—one greater thing, Kulik," he said, "to share the joy. Take the little Crema, boy—she is yours. Long have I meant her for you. Take her with you to Vienna, and give old Friebe! a little part in the fullness of the future years."

For a moment Kulik stood there, speechless. Then with an inarticulate cry, he flung his arms about the old man.

And so it was in the moment of their first perfect nearness that the two friends said their last farewell, but it is was not little Friebe! who wept.

*An Extenuating
Circumstance*

BY

E. ADELIA LOW

An Extenuating Circumstance

THE business day of Mr. Hayward had been long and trying, but at its close, seated comfortably before an open fire, his wife beside him, an interesting book in his hand, life seemed very much worth while to this *blase* man of the world.

"Married two months, Dorothy, dear—here we are—you with your work and I with my book, settled down as cosily as if it had always been," he remarked, lazily stretching himself.

"How foolish of us not to have been married long ago," he continued, looking up into his wife's sensitive face. In his present contentment he had obviously lost sight of the real reason for their long delay—his own indifference.

Mrs. Hayward glanced up from her flimsy bit of work, and smiled sympathetically. "Here is a letter which I meant to give you before dinner," she said, as she handed it to him across the table.

He held her hand in his a moment, giving it a little squeeze before releasing it, to open his letter.

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"Is there any bad news, dear?" she said as she caught his look of distress.

"Yes—rather. It tells me of the death of an old friend—Mildred Shaw. You never knew her, though, did you?"

"No; she was here the winter that I was East. Was she a very dear friend?"

"She did me a great favor once, for which I can never be too grateful," he replied, thoughtfully, as he folded the letter and slowly put it back into its envelope. "We drove together on the desert a good deal that winter and I found her very witty and amusing, though somewhat irresponsible at times. She always said and did the unexpected, and often that unexpected was extremely sensible. Ah, well!" (putting the letter in his pocket) "that's over—she has solved her mysteries."

He sat, reminiscently silent, looking into the fire. "Not your kind of a woman at all," he resumed. "You were so shy and reserved before we were married, Dorothy, I hardly knew you, and at times I am not sure that I do now—together. You are so unlike any other woman—therein lies your charm," smiling and reaching his hand across the table for hers.

"How am I different?" she asked, laying her hand in his outstretched one.

"I can't explain, exactly. Sometimes you are as warm and sunny and intimate as this fascinating Southern climate; then I catch glimpses of heights and depths as mysterious and unfathomable as the canons, and again I come upon

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such stretches of reserve that I feel like a traveler lost in the desert, but I have the intrepidity of the born explorer. I shall find you some day."

Mrs. Hayward rose from her seat beside the table, leaned over the back of her husband's chair, kissed him, and lightly stroked his cheek.

"So you find me rather of a puzzle?" she laughed. "Love is the magic key to most women puzzles—if held by the right person," she added archly, as she sat down on the arm of his chair.

Without replying, he put one arm around her, and with the other hand turned low the lamp. The magical firelight played over everything, throwing their faces now into light, now into shadow, while there stole over them a blissful silence. Absorbed in thought, they sat, silent as the great desert. Its majestic stillness had taught Dorothy Hayward the futility of speech, and given her an acquired calmness and strength foreign to many women. It was this poise, gained by her long life in the desert country, that baffled her husband.

A knock aroused them. Mr. Hayward turned up the light and went to the door.

"A message, sir."

He took the note from the servant's hand, rapidly scanned its contents, and turning to his wife, said: "A line from Sumner—wants me to meet him at the club to talk over that mining scheme. It's important, and I'm afraid I'll have to go. I'll be home as early as possible, but if I'm late don't wait up for me. There are some new books in my den that may interest you.

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What a nuisance this going out again is!" he exclaimed, as he put on his coat and hat in the hall. A moment he held his wife in his arms, kissed her, and was gone.

Returning to the sitting room, Mrs. Hayward rang her bell. "Betty, please ask the cook to prepare a light supper for Mr. Hayward, as he has gone out and will not be home until late. I think I shall not need you to-night. If I do I will ring. Good-night."

Left alone, Mrs. Hayward seated herself in her husband's chair, before the fire, and began to read, but nothing interested her; her book dropped, unnoticed, to her lap, while she sat gazing into the fire, exulting and gloating over her happiness. A delicious thrill went through her as she pictured the long, delightful years ahead of her as "George's wife." To satisfy herself that it was real and not a dream she suddenly arose and went into the next room—his den.

What a man's odor there was all about, and how she loved this room, filled, as it was, with his personality! She dropped into a chair, beside the desk, laid her cheek lovingly for a moment on his writing pad, impulsively took up his pen and kissed it, and laughing foolishly to herself, buried her face in his house-coat, which he had carelessly left on a chair. So completely did he possess her that she loved even the odor of his clothes, his books—everything belonging to him. A gentle, masterful man she found him, and she gloried in his power over her.

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She looked aimlessly about, until her eyes fell upon the new books which he had mentioned. She picked up one after another, and finding none of them attractive, went to the book-case and selected an old favorite, and, returning again to the sitting room, settled herself to read. Idly she turned the leaves, stopping occasionally to note some marked passage or recall the tones of her husband's voice, while he had read them to her. As she held the book to the light for a closer inspection, a paper fell out. There was no address, and absently she opened the paper and read:

"Dear George:—

"You ask my advice about your marriage. I should say it is the only honorable thing to do after so long an engagement. You may not love her now, but you will in time. She is worth a hundred such women as I am. Take my advice and don't delay. Yours sincerely,

"M——."

"How came this letter in this book?" she queried. "Who wrote it and to whom was it written?"

"Dear George" might mean her husband. *Could* it? Was she the person George was advised to marry? The thought was unbearable. All the poise acquired with her maturer years deserted her, and she became again the passionate, impulsive girl of her early youth. She could not sit still, but paced about the room, her brain in a whirl, running her fingers through her hair, as if to collect her thoughts, and then beating

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the palm of one hand with the closed fingers of the other. She stopped suddenly in her walk, with a half-frightened look. She remembered the long engagement and subsequent hasty marriage. Could it be possible she had given herself to a man who did not love her? Rapidly she reviewed many unconscious acts of her husband's, and as she did so, there came to her calmer thoughts and greater trust. As she sank back into the depths of his easy-chair, she asked herself why she had been so foolish. "Why should I hold George responsible for this note!" she exclaimed. "He may not know any more about it than I do—and, yet—" She resolved to ask him about it when he returned, certain that he would tell her the truth—but what was the truth?

She almost hoped, if the letter were his, that he would tell her a falsehood rather than such a ghastly truth. The desolation of the years to come without his love would be unbearable.

The minutes went by, and with them some of her distrust and agony. She gradually became calmer, and as she did so, she hated herself for her loss of self-control and injustice to her husband.

At last the sound of carriage wheels aroused her, and by the time Mr. Hayward came up the steps and put his key in the latch, she had completely mastered herself.

"Why, Dorothy," he exclaimed with pleased surprise, as she opened the door for him, "how good of you to wait up for me!" Quietly disposing of his hat and coat, and putting his arm

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around her, they passed into the sitting-room. "How have you spent the evening? Did you find the new books interesting?" he asked.

Mrs. Hayward returned only a faint smile in answer, but noticing the tired look about his eyes rang the bell for the supper she had ordered.

"Jove, but it seems good to be home again," he said, as he wearily sat down before the fire, and put on his slippers.

The shaded light, the bright fire and the cosy supper, together with his wife's companionship rested and soothed him. "How do you suppose I ever managed so long without you, girlie?" he said, gaily, as he passed her the sugar. "His gray eyes darkened and glowed as he looked at her; his heart was so full of the joy of her fragrant presence that it was not until late when they were seated together on the couch that he noticed her abstraction.

"You look a little pale, my dear—headache again?"

"No, I haven't a headache," she replied absently, as she arose and crossed the room to the table. She picked up a paper, and looking at him questioningly, continued, as she held it toward him. "This fell out of a book I was reading this evening, but I am sure it cannot be addressed to you—is it?"

Mr. Hayward started. As she held it in her hand, he recognized it instantly. He knew it to be from Mildred Shaw, and the one which he must have carelessly thrust into that book. Was it *the* one which might destroy his happiness and wreck

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both their lives? Had he not burned it after all? Fool! He never knew until this moment how much he loved his wife, nor how dear her love and trust was to him. Mildred Shaw was dead. His determination was, therefore, quickly reached. Dorothy's love—Dorothy's absolute trust was too precious to be risked for a moment's weakness, to be lost for a paltry note which should have been burned months before.

With no sign of surprise or other emotion in his face, with every muscle under absolute control, he rose, and going toward her, he said, quietly: "Let me see it, Dorothy."

"Oh, George," she cried, passionately, as she handed it to him: "It wasn't written to you, was it? Say it wasn't! I love you—I trust you—but—oh, *say it!* Tell me it is not your letter, and that you do love me!"

Striving bravely to keep back the tears and to still her quivering lips, she watched every flicker of his face as he read the letter. Keenly conscious of her intense gaze, conscious also of what absolute self-mastery meant at that moment, he finished reading, and then quietly threw it into the open fire. Without a word he held out his arms, and as she buried her face on his breast, and he crushed her passionately to him, he murmured: "No, Dorothy, dear, the letter is not mine, and I do love you. Harris borrowed the book and returned it only yesterday; but if it were—could you love and trust me still?"

She raised her tearful eyes to his, and in them he read his answer.

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Worshipfully, reverently, he kissed her brow—her eyes—her hair. “God!” he exclaimed, brokenly, “I’m not worthy of so great a love—no man is.”

Ye Tithe Mint and Rue

BY

EMMA B. EDWARDS

Ye Tithe Mint and Rue



T was their last walk together before Jean left. They stopped once at Margaret McDonald's cottage, where Jean went in to say goodbye to her friend.

"God bless you and keep you, dearie, until you come back to us," the gentle old voice said, tremulously. "It almost seems to us here that you know enough now, but you have worked hard to go—only come home to us the same sweet, leal lassie we all love, and I guess the extra book-learning won't hurt you much. You'll be a splendid minister's wife, my child."

"I want to be worthy of Donald, Mother Margaret, and worthy of the beautiful, helpful life I can live here among you. It will be only two years away, you know, and Donald will be gone, too, then we'll come home together, stronger and wiser to consecrate ourselves to our work—the Lord's work," she added reverently.

As Jean came from the cottage Donald drew her arm within his, turning her footsteps backward.

"Just a little longer, Jean, girl, this last evening is so short. I won't see you for two years, Jean."

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Jean's lashes were wet, but she tried to comfort. "The time will pass, wonderfully fast, Donald boy. You will be absorbed in your theological study, and then, of course, very soon you will be assigned a charge for the Sabbath services. You must write me long, long letters, dear, telling me about every bit of your work and about every bit of your heart, too, Donald."

"And you, Jean, do you feel timid about going East to the big college? Does your heart fail you?"

Jean clung closer to his arm as she answered, "I fee a wee bit timid, Donald. But mother always wanted me to go home to her own college—it was her dearest wish for me. Because of that I am the more glad to be able to take my post-graduate course there. Then, too, I want the training and culture for myself. I shall be more worthy of our work, and not a bit spoiled, boy, really not a bit spoiled."

For the first months the new life into which Jean went, was bewildering in its multiplicity of interests, and unpleasantly strange in its nervous tension. She often longed for the serene ways, and simple duties of her home village. Gradually, as the weeks went, she lost her timidity and self-consciousness, and began to adjust herself to the new conditions, and to enjoy the sparkle and excitement of college life.

It was precisely her entire unconsciousness of her charm, that made her so irresistibly charming to everyone. She was natural, sweet and direct in manner, with a sincere courtesy

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and tranquil womanly poise. There was no shadow of apathy about her despite her serenity. She was very keenly alive, but alive without nervous fussiness, or a straining after conscious approval. Her mind was fine and clear, with an analytical faculty rare among young women. Her delight in her work, and her enthusiasm unvacillating, made her sure friends among the faculty members.

Between Donald and Jean passed long, newsy, confidential letters. Jean wrote without reserve of her life, her new friends, her new thoughts, and of her happy anticipation of their life service together when Donald should be ordained. Donald drew sketches of his university life and parish work, and wrote of the deepening and strengthening of his conviction that the old church's dogmas were wisest and best suited to the needs of men.

"Instead of any painful upheaval of doubt and skepticism, Jean, my research work has but made me the more convinced that the staunch old church doctrines are the safest for all. They made rugged Christians of our fathers, men unafraid of obstacle or tribulation, in awe only of the just wrath of God."

Jean's eyes glowed as she read, and she exulted in the steadfast faith of her lover.

At the end of the first year she was conscious of no change in herself. Her attitude toward her girlish ideals was unaltered, her faith in her child's faith unswerving. She began her last year's work buoyantly, eager to snatch all the

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priceless boons of wisdom, "for the garnering, by and by," she said happily to herself.

In the winter term she began more extensive studies in philosophy and psychology. With her habitual thoroughness she spent many hours in collateral reading and research. The study soon grew fascinating for its own sake.

Encouraged and stimulated by the head of the department she studied with him the philosophies of the ancient peoples, the development of their symbols and languages, their beliefs and traditions. With her unusually mature judgment she balanced and weighed conclusions, selected and rejected. Tracing to their sources many of the simple unquestioned traditions of her childhood, she discovered that they were not barricaded by the walls of authenticity, and divine origin, but rather built on the uncertain sands of folklore or mythology.

Although hurt and baffled and blinded by the new light she was too honest to discard without reflection. In her trouble she wrote to Donald in simple candor, of what she found in her study, and asked for help, confident that he would point out the true values, and give her back her old faith.

"I have become confused by voluminous reading," she comforted herself, "confused and unable to reason and adjust. Donald will straighten it all out as if by magic. He is too fair not to be honest, but wise enough to lift me from this miserable chaos into stronger, saner faith."

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Donald's answer came promptly. "My dearest Jean, your letter grieved me inexpressibly. I never associated religious unrest with my stable Jean. To have you confess that doubts from you have assailed our impregnable tenets, shocked me terribly. Your reading, dear girl, has been indiscriminate and dangerous.

"Can prehistoric myths assail the word of God given through his chosen people, the Hebrews? Can our belief in miracles crumble when their story is recorded by the men who walked and talked with the One who performed them? Are we wiser than our fathers? Are we presumptuous enough to think that we dare discard those beliefs which were the bulwarks of their faith? Put away these ungodly doubts, Jean, I implore, and be my own sensible, loyal girl. A clergyman's wife must never waver in her allegiance to the teachings of the church."

In like vein the letter ran. Jean read on to the end, searching for the something for which her heart ached, but did not find. She put it down at last, miserably conscious that somehow Donald had failed her.

"He does not answer me. He does not tell me why I must believe, he only chides and admonishes. O Donald, love, I thought you of all the world could help."

With harassing insistence ran in her mind this extract from his letter: "A clergyman's wife must never waver in her allegiance to the teachings of the church."

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For the first time in her life she asked herself what were the teachings of her church, and to Jean the question was inevitably the beginning of conscientious investigation. She went to the college library, and searched for references on church doctrine. She read closely, and long; then put aside the book, to think but longer.

In a few days she sent another appeal to the man she loved. "O, Donald, help me. I am bruised and sore, and all astray. Don't reproach me, but explain to me as you would to a little child, slowly and patiently, but, oh, explain!

"Do you believe in damnation for all men alike? Do you believe that a man is never to have a chance anywhere who never has had a chance here? Do you believe that everyone, everyone, Donald, must be converted and sanctified in the regular channels, to be saved? Do you believe that all the good are to go to Heaven, and all the bad to Hell? And who are all the good, and who are all the bad, Donald? I have never been converted, dear, I know it now. I have always tried to be good, but I can't remember the time when I was "born again." Do you wish me to believe these things, beloved? Must I believe these things to be your wife? Do you believe them, yourself? Don't evade me, but tell me the truth."

Jean gave herself no time to think or brood until the next letter came. She was dully conscious that if that failed, she would not reveal herself again, that although they might not think alike in this, yet their love should not be em-

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bittered by caustic argument or reproaches. In all things vital, she told herself, they would always be together, their love was too deep for bitterness or condemnation.

"Do I believe in regeneration, and redemption, in sanctification, and ultimate reward or punishment?" Donald asked: "All these are to me impregnable foundation stones. I shall believe in them, and preach them with all my heart's strength, and Jean, you must believe them, too. You must let me teach you the old way of salvation.

"I could never be true to myself, or my people, or to you, if I took you for my wife when you were in heart an alien, when we could not work together with one purpose, one passion—the salvation of lost souls. Let me come to you, Jean, and plead with you, before it is too late, and your heart is hardened."

Much more he wrote, but the same inflexible ultimatum was dominant from first until the very last. She must believe as he believed, else she could not be his wife. He would give her time, he would come to her himself, but still she knew that if she did not yield, he would break their betrothal, upheld by the conviction that he was doing a holy thing.

She put her head down on the open pages, too stunned and hopeless to cry. She felt she could not bear the inevitable painful conflict, if he came. He loved her as he could never love another woman, that she knew, but she was sure, too, that he would tear her from his heart if she

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came between him and his faith. And because she knew that he was suffering as sorely as herself, she humbled herself to him.

"Never mind if I can't believe all that I once did, Donald dearest, I believe in all the big, vital truths, the love of God, the purity and matchless teachings of Jesus Christ, and the need of all men for redemption, whether it be by your way, or by my way. I can work with you, and love our people with you. Don't send me from you, Donald. Say that I may come to you when the year is over. Don't break both our hearts, dear. No, don't come to me, I could not bear it, but say that I may come to you."

She felt that his reply could bring no deeper misery, yet when it was due, and did not come, she could scarcely bear the suspense. The letter was a week late. For a week had the man wrestled with himself.

"I have put off, from hour to hour, from day to day, the supreme agony. I have opened the Book day and night for guidance. I have cried out in my misery that it could not be for me—this trial. There never was so beautiful a woman as you Jean, nor so bonny, nor so good.

"If thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire."

"I would not wince at the hell of fire, Jean. It is much more than that. I have consecrated my life to the service of my Lord. I have become sanctified by laying myself on the altar a volun-

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tary sacrifice. Dare I, dare I, Jean, violate my holy vows by taking to my heart a woman outside of salvation, even one who does not deem my salvation as necessary to peace with God? O, my beloved, my beloved."

Dry-eyed Jean read, and read again, as if she would not miss one word, or perchance that she might find one new word somewhere which would erase all the others from her heart.

The letter came in the Sunday morning mail. Late in the afternoon Jean walked over to the home of Dr. Malcolm, who had been a dear friend of her mother's. She felt that she could talk to him as she could not bear to talk to any other.

His old housekeeper, Martha, showed her in, and took her to the library where the clergyman sat before the fire, in relaxed and tranquil Sabbath mood.

Jean hastened to apologize, "Forgive me for intruding, today, Dr. Malcolm, but I was selfish enough to come. You are wise and good, and loving. You will be kind, but you will tell me where I am wrong, I know."

"Sit down, my child, and tell me all about it."

Dr. Malcolm's voice was mellow and low, with a cadence of rich brotherly sympathy. "Rest a bit and then we'll talk. I am glad that you thought me worthy."

He put Jean into his own spacious chair, as he spoke, giving no sign that he noticed how worn she looked.

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Soon she began to talk. She did not spare herself. She told of her reading, her subsequent unrest of mind, her final conclusions, and her confession to her lover, and his decision.

"I am not quite a heretic, Dr. Malcolm, I truly am not. I am not defending myself to you against Donald's decision. He must be true to himself and the church he serves. I know I am paining you by my confession, but I am honest, and so willing to be persuaded," she finished appealingly.

Dr. Malcolm's keen gray eyes watched Jean's face as she talked. They were sometimes stern, and sometimes soft, but understanding, always.

After a silence, he began to speak, and Jean listened eagerly. He did not attempt to refute her arguments directly. He only explained the origin and growth and virtues of the church's doctrines. Then clearly and patiently, he pointed out the dangers arising from indiscriminate reading by untutored minds; their hasty, irrational conclusions, which often corroded their morals; and the instability of action resulting from these erroneous judgments.

"I would not attempt to dissuade you, Jean, or force you to believe as I believe in all respects. You are an intelligent woman and should be left perfectly free to think as you must. Your morals are safe, and your faith in your Creator sure. You would never wreck the usefulness of your husband's life. You would be a tower of strength and sweetness always. Does he say, in his arro-

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gant self-assurance that he will not marry you if you do not recant?"

Dr. Malcolm had arisen, and was pacing up and down, sorely grieved for Jean's distress, and in hot wrath against the man who was casting her from him.

"Don't blame Donald, 'Dr. Malcolm," Jane begged. "He is only doing what he thinks is right. Could you as a clergyman of an orthodox church marry me, thinking as I do? Could you marry me?" Jean asked earnestly.

Dr. Malcolm stopped abruptly at the question, and looked at Jean. Could he marry her, would he marry her—this girl with the beautiful mouth, and beautiful woman's soul looking from the hazel eyes, this girl whose mouth drooped now so sorrowingly, and whose eyes were tired and sad; would he marry her? He almost lost his staid, elderly balance at the question. Oh to be young again, and to have the right to win this woman, and to hold her, against the world!

He renewed his walk, and answered gravely, although his heart was still pounding against his clerical waistcoat.

"Yes, Jean, I think I could marry you, and do no violence to my duty, my church, or my God. Youth is cruelly harsh in her judgments. The shading of the blacks and whites into the kinder, softer grays, only comes with years, and bruised hearts. Poor child, poor child, I wish I could help you."

When Jean had gone, and he sat alone, his heart was very heavy, because he could not bear

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the burden for her. He looked where she had sat, and sighed wistfully.

He could hear Martha's heavy footsteps as she came and went, setting his evening tea, his lonely evening tea.

"And she asked me if I could marry her, I an orthodox clergyman! I'd marry her if I lost my own soul, and I wouldn't care a damn whether she believed in damnation or not," he finished aggressively and quite aloud, but only the white Angora ball on the hearthstone rug heard the profanation, and she was no mischief-maker.

Jean went home and wrote her last letter, and because she knew that it was her last—that after it was sent she would send no more—her heart-ache seemed more poignant.

Commencement was but a few months away. The pressure of work proved a blessing to Jean. She spared herself nothing, finding actual relief in weariness. She had quite decided what she would do, when it was all over. In the autumn Donald would be ordained, and would assume the parish charge in their home village. To return there would be to embarrass his work, and wound them both afresh. She had been offered an assistantship in the history department of her Alma Mater and had accepted it. The summer months she would spend with her mother's kinsfolk, as she had promised.

When she went to say goodbye to Dr. Malcolm he chided her gently: "You look very tired, my child. Your eyes are too big, and your cheeks

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too white. You must do nothing but rest this summer—and hang that ecclesiastical saint,” he said to himself.

A letter came from Margaret McDonald the day Jean went away. The tears which she had been keeping back for months flowed in unrestrained abandon.

“You’re not coming back to us, dearie? You’re not coming home? Margaret’s old heart is sore over what you have told her. Yes, I’ll keep your secret, child. I’ll tell no one why you are not to be Donald McGregor’s wife, but for myself I canna sit under his preaching again. I canna pretend to receive the message from his lips. You say that he is only doing what he thinks is right; and when, Jean bairn, did the good Lord give him the right to judge men’s souls? He has only to do with the message. May the Lord forgive me, but my heart is bitter and sore, and I canna help it. My poor bairn, my poor bairn!”

Jean had letters from Margaret during the fall and winter which followed. She heard of Donald’s unremitting devotion to his charge, that he spared himself neither day or night, that no sacrifice seemed too hard for him to make, no service too irksome.

Late in the spring of that year he succumbed to an attack of typhoid fever, which left him an invalid for months. When he was able to take up his work again, Margaret wrote that he had resigned his pastorate to his substitute, and had gone to the city, as a missionary to the slums.

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Jean's love followed him everywhere. She knew that he was struggling still to worship only duty, and not yet had peace come, that not yet had he been able to put her image from him.

In the second summer after she was graduated she went home on a visit to Margaret. Old places and associations hurt her, naturally, but she did not brood. She found that a new heritage of peace had come to her out of the way of rebellion and pain.

One evening toward the close of her visit, Jean left the cottage after tea, for a walk alone. Margaret was sitting without the house reading. Feeling, rather than seeing some one near her, she looked up from her meditation of John's Gospel to find Donald McGregor standing by her side.

"Where is Jean, Margaret?" he asked. "Please tell me where I may find Jean," as though it were not strange to ask for Jean.

Margaret's stern eyes searched his face. The lines she saw there softened her heart, but she gave no sign.

"And what do you want of Jean, Donald McGregor? What right have you to ask for Jean? You're naught but a stranger to her. Your ways are parted now."

"I know," the man said humbly, his voice keen with pain. "I was the one to part Jean's way and mine. In my colossal blindness I put her from me because she could not believe in all my

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narrow, stubborn faith. I crucified her for a dead creed. My eyes have been opened for a long time. I have lived with men and women, Margaret, and learned to know their hearts. My arrogant pride has been humbled by coming close to the real issues of life. Through these months of work among my people, I have come to realize the loveliness of the treasure I crushed in my conceit. The beauty, Margaret, the beauty of the vision has been with me always, but I have not dared to come to her—my transgression has been too great for any human forgiveness.

“When I heard that she was here, I came without volition of my own. I came to ask her forgiveness—and then I shall go back. O, Margaret, I have suffered too—I count that nothing—but I shall want her all my life, and be bereft.”

Margaret turned her head away. She could not look upon his face—and her own eyes were full of tears, but she could not forgive him yet.

“You little deserve that she should forgive you, man, you little deserve it, but a woman’s heart—a woman’s heart—. The lassie is at the gate now; go bring her in.”

Jean showed no surprise as Donald came to meet her in the twilight, she only searched his face.

He did not touch her, he stood a little apart. Once he stretched out his arms, then let them fall. There was no need for speech. All that he had told Margaret, Jean saw on the brow, in

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the softened eyes, and around the tired, grave mouth, and after she had looked and looked, and was satisfied, her face was lighted with a smile so deep, so tender, and so glad, that once again, as though he knew it not, Donald opened his arms—and Jean came into them, and rested there.

*On the Edge of Death
Valley*

BY

A. M. WALDEN



"I beheld Old Charlie."

On the Edge of Death Valley

WHILE I was a reporter for a San Francisco paper a few years ago, I had occasion to make a trip to the edge of Death Valley to look at a mine. It was my intention also to write up the trip.

From San Francisco we went by rail to Caliente, thence by stage up Kern River Valley to Walker's Pass through which we crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains. As we climbed the western slope of the range through live-oak and pine woods, imagine my surprise when on descending the eastern side we were precipitated, as it were, into a forest of yucca and cactus. Fifteen miles below we came to a lone cabin occupying a space within certain degrees of latitude and longitude called Coyote Holes—unmusical, it is true, but a characteristically western name derived from the numerous holes dug in its vicinity by the coyotes in search of water.

Here we got out and stretched our legs and had another smoke, of course. Old Charlie and Woodard, who had been pulling at their pipes constantly, refilled them with gusto, remarking

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for the hundrdth time that "a smoke was pretty near the best thing on God's earth."

We were now at the eastern edge of Mojave desert at the base of the Sierras. We drove along the foothills to Indian Wells, where we struck due east across the desert. It was so hot that we began sleeping during the day and traveling by night. Finally after a long dusty drive through sand and gravel and a vegetation of cactus and greasewood, we stopped at the well which Old Charlie had dug. After resting we made the last drive across the sandy expanse to the Argus range. As we neared the canyon the sight of a stone cabin was mighty restful to the eyes.

"Yes; that's my cabin," said Charlie. " 'Twouldn't pass a Masonic test, but it's comfortable all right. Just built it out of the rough rock I found around here. Come in, gentlemen, and have a drink."

At that each man of us felt like falling through that cabin door, but Woodard said to go slow; that having come from the West into the effete East we should not be as unconventional as was our wont. While we tried to slow up from our sudden start before Woodard put a damper on our *spirits*, we heard the most outlandish swearing inside that modest abode that I ever heard before in my life and I've lived West some too.

"Smells real smoky, don't it?" said Woodard, slapping his leg. "Listen, boys. By thunder, that's real artistic, ain't it? That ain't none

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of your plain low-down cussin'; it's poetic, I tell you. "Just listen." The oaths swarmed, puffed and streamed out to beat the band. They made the atmosphere shimmer like the sun does on a hot day. They even scorched the grass; and as Woodard said: "It smelled smoky."

"That would do for Wagner's opera," continued Woodard delightedly, for he had traveled some and seen some notwithstanding his careless sling of the English language. Indeed, if the notes of that deep voice inside might have been caught, minus the profanity they were fairly weighted with—the anger, the scorn, the derision, the disgust—well, people wouldn't have to hear it twice to know what it meant, that's all.

We soon found what was the matter. Some traveler—for the latchstring always hung on the outside—had been in. "Stayed two weeks," said Charlie, examining the larder, "and then, by thunder, didn't wash the dishes, get a supply of wood nor clean up. I meant they should have the grub—that's what it is here for—but the idea of their not cleaning up their trash after 'em." Old Charlie muttered considerably. A good drink of whiskey, however, soon put him in a better humor.

"A drink apiece, that's the old man's limit," said Woodard after we had filed out of the door to look about us again.

"Holy Mother! I wisht-to-morrow-hurry," murmured the Mexican helper so disconsolately that it set us all to laughing; but let me tell you

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there was more than one made the wish "Mex" did.

"That's a mighty good ol' cuss," said Woodard, jerking his thumb toward the cabin where Charlie was preparing a meal. It was evident these two old fellows loved each other. Long association, together with the loneliness of camp life, had bound them together as nothing else could have done.

"A queer cuss, too," ruminated Woodard. "Know what he does? Well, he gets down off the wagon during our trips and plants the seeds of the fruit he eats. Says maybe somebody will be glad of it some day." He thoughtfully knocked the ashes from his pipe and remained silent until I asked a question. "No; he ain't got no regular way of makin' a livin', except occasional teamin'. Just goes around helpin' those who need him. Never asks for no money. Nobody'd think of offerin' him any for fear of startin' that profanity-machine of his'n. Goes around nursin' the sick and helpin' to build the settlers' houses. Don't need much to live on in this country. The streams hold your fish, the woods your game." I thought I saw him wink at the boys but I was not sure. "Old Charlie is pretty nigh seventy, but he's young yet. Close to that figger myself."

I could not restrain my look of amazement. He was rugged and weather-beaten, to be sure; beseamed with many wrinkles, but they appeared to be those of hardship rather than age, for he was wiry and strong and looked no more than

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fifty. And there was Old Charlie in the cabin hopping around in his leather apron (so slick he might have greased the skillet with it) as agile as a sparrow.

I pulled out my note-book. Ever since I had first seen Old Charlie and Woodard, who met us at Kern River to take us by team the rest of the one hundred and fifty miles, my curiosity had been aroused concerning these two men. As I looked at them in their rough clothes and high-laced boots, with their slouched hats pulled over their eyes, my inclination to pull out my note-book and ask: "Legitimate or illegitimate; married or single; name back East; father hung or died a natural death?" had been hard to restrain. I realized, though, by the appearance of their frank, yet inscrutable faces that this would not go with these men. I might ask those impertinent questions in the city, but here—no siree. Seeing my book Woodard grew suspicious.

"Prof.?" he inquired screwing up his eyes.

"Nope."

"Glad you're not. Had one of them things traveling with us once and he didn't know how to lead a cayuse along a trail." Woodard's lips were pursed contemptuously. "Told Old Charlie then that these professors didn't know everything. What you got that dinky little red book for?"

"Well, Woodard, to tell you the truth," I said, "you know when one goes home, folks expect him to take back some information. Now I am going to tell a lot of lies about mountain

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lions, of course, but I thought I would like to put just a drop of truth in—about what a wonderful old man Charlie is, for instance. I wanted to get the age correct.”

“You bet he is wonderful,” returned Woodard, his eyes lighting up. “You know what he done? Went clean over that Death Valley.” One scrubby finger indicated the direction of the valley of many songs and stories. “Found a whole village of ragged outlaws over on t’other side of the clump called Funeral Mountains. This is between you and me. Dug a well in the desert. Never expected to go that way again himself, but said some day a tenderfoot who didn’t know enough to take water with him might get thirsty. Them outlaws treated him like a king. Of course he had along a lot of old magazines that he got at the end of the railroad, for Old Charlie always goes prepared; thoughtful as a woman. Says he never expected to find humans over there, but took along something anyway. Says he is never surprised at anything. Says when he goes to hell he’s goin’ to take some fire. Mought be all fake stories about fire down there and it mought be as cold as Christmas—so he’s goin’ to take some matches.” Woodard chuckled delightedly. “Say,” he continued, “you remember when we met you at Kern River? Well, if all the kids followed our team for a long way *towards* the mountains, you’d oughter seen them when we came in. Why all of ’em, Mexican half-breeds, Indians, every kid of ’em secretly loves Old Charlie. He could hardly shake ’em

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off. Yes; come from old Kentucky when fourteen; ran away. That's all I know. He's so close-mouthed he won't tell even me." Woodard looked unhappy but presently went on: "Every man who asks about his past gets a different story. To one he tells he's an outlaw; to another that he's a widower—murdered his wife and ran away to keep from hangin', though I know for sure that ain't so; to another that he shot a man—describes it hair-raisingly too. At first they was all mad, but by and by when one of 'em caught him bustin' with laughter, he realized it was one of Charlie's jokes. He hates curiosity; never asks nobody nothin' and expects the same in return. Would take any kind of a cuss in and feed him and let him stay as long as he wanted."

Looking through the doorway we saw our host and the Mexican helper quickly clearing the cabin. The dirt floor was swept and the table was wiped off with water heated in the big fireplace. As the odor of bacon came to us on the breeze a strong voice thundered "Dinner!"

I look back in my past and forward in my future and see that it was the best dinner I ever did or ever will taste. We seated ourselves at the clean clothless table and drank our tin cups of coffee and ate our biscuits and bacon. The men filed out, but out of curiosity I lingered, taking in all the cabin arrangements.

Feeling a pull at my sleeve, I beheld Old Charlie. He gave me a very astute wink and laying a knotty finger on his lips, whispered:

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"Follow me." In my imagination I had begun to call the figure that stood in the doorway the "Mighty Man of the Mountains." What wonder then that I, a tenderfoot, meekly followed my hero? He appeared to encompass everything with his eagle eyes, to pause, weigh quickly, calculate; then beckoning me, he led the way around the cabin where we sat down behind a huge rock.

"Think anyone saw us coming?"

As he leaned toward me I was appalled by the wickedness of his eyes.

"N-n-no," I stammered. "I am sure no one saw us."

"So much the better." He took me roughly by the shoulder and gazed deeply into my eyes as if he would see my very soul.

"Well," he said after his scrutiny, "you may be a tenderfoot, but I believe you are a brave one all right." I don't suppose I entirely hid my satisfaction at this remark, for I noticed an amused glint in the dark gray eyes opposite.

"Well, now, listen, son. The distance between you and my gun ain't very fur, is it? And even if it was, I am a mighty good shot. I kin knock the tip off that pine tree." He fingered his pistol lovingly and seemed for a moment lost in memories of his gun-prowess, while I, not having much of the detective instinct, was completely in the dark. By and by I saw one glimmer but it served only to confuse me the more.

Did Woodard really believe all he said about this man at my side, or was it a cracked-up job between them, I pondered. I'll admit my mind

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wasn't very steady as I wildly cast about, seeking the threads of this mystery that I might weave them into whole cloth. I'll admit, also, that I was trembling just a little.

"I wisht I had a Bible." Old Charlie's voice startled me.

"W-w-why?" I gasped.

"For you to swear on."

"Why, I have one." I was immensely relieved but felt very silly as I pulled the little Bible from my pocket.

"I did it to please my mother," I remarked, handing it over.

Charlie took it gingerly.

"Lay your hand on it, son. Now say after me: 'I solemnly swear that I will not breathe a word of what Charlie tells me. I give my word as a man of honor.'"

This certainly seemed well-clinched. I solemnly swore.

"I am a man of honor also. I give you *my* word of honor that I won't shoot you if you keep my secret."

"What is it?" I was gaining courage for he had stopped fingering his gun.

"Well, see that clump of willows to the westward? I've got about twenty men in hiding there—more'n two to one, you see, son. All I have to do is to give the signal. All the men in this camp have got some coin on them and they're all bad men but you. Know why I'm tellin' you all this? Feel sorry for you, son;

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and when you hear guns, I want you to cut for the mountains."

I have confessed to being a tenderfoot and I must admit that my knees sought each other's society, as I replied: "Yes; I'll lay low." My reserved thought was: "We couldn't do anything with so many against us so there's no use trying to warn the others."

"There's not going to be any killing?" questioned I.

"Well, no; not if I kin help it." Again there came the amused glint in his eyes.

After a long twilight, for it was in the early part of July, the night hovered darkly down. Needless to say I went supperless to bunk and lay sleepless for many weary hours. A breeze whistled through the alders and buzzed through the brush. It was my first experience at night in a tent in wild western wastes. The howl of the coyotes and the strange night noises—lullabys for the other fellows—kept my eyes propped firmly open. Great wings seemed to brush against the frail white walls and I felt that God was pretty far away. I vowed then and there if I had a whole hide after this escapade, never to buy another mine from a smooth talker when it would mean a trip across the mountains to look at a hole in the ground.

Old Charlie had been watching me furtively after our exciting chat, and how did I know that he did not lie in the bunk across from mine with one eye open? Was Old Charlie asleep? That snore was natural—Old Charlie—those men—

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why somehow I was in a big city—and then there were girls coming along a wooded path and carrying buckets full of blackberries. My thoughts were wandering. As I tried to keep from drifting into sleep there was a loud report. Yes; of a revolver! More and more! Those must be the reserve men and I had brought no pistol. Silly fool, to believe all the bad men of the West were dead.

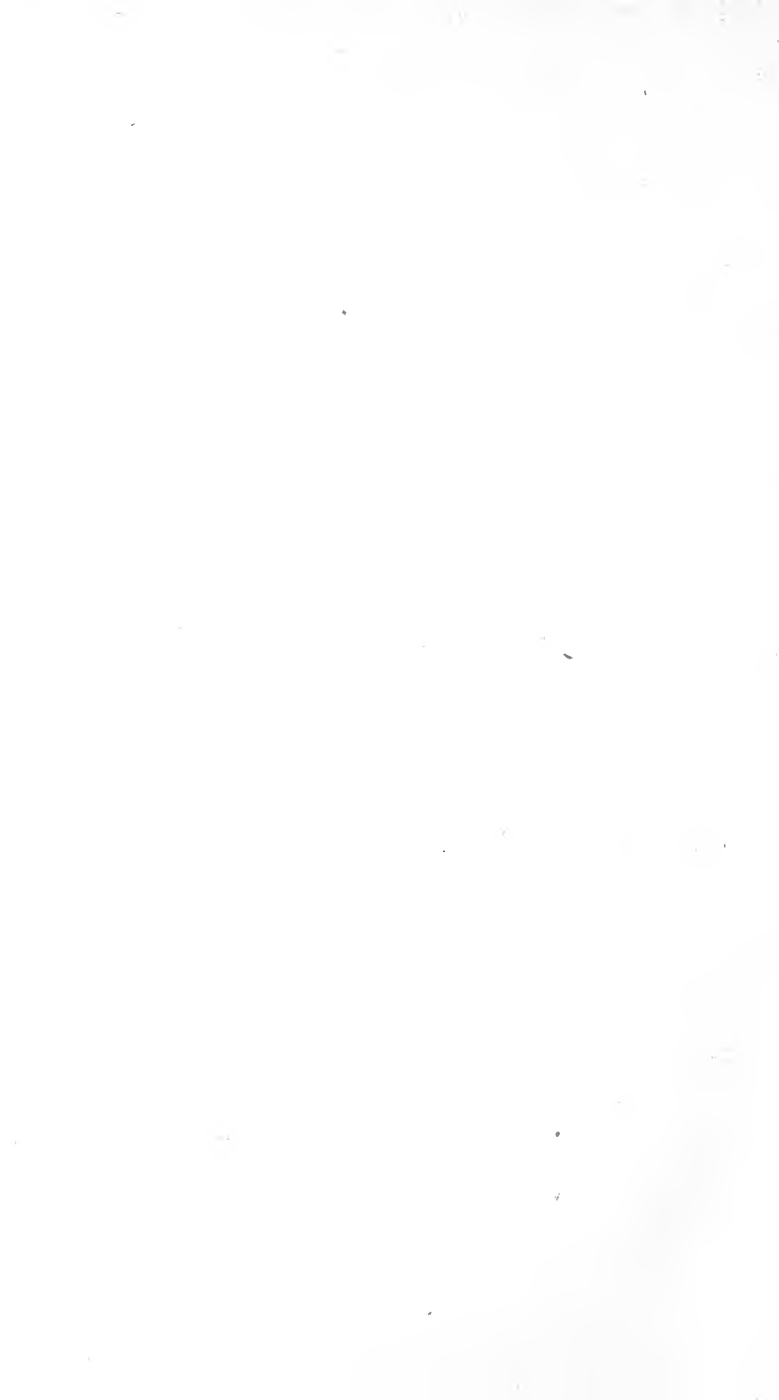
I jumped from my bunk with the wild idea of running for the hills. I stared about in amazement. It was broad daylight and all the bunks were empty. In a spasm of alarm mingled with curiosity I rushed from the tent—only to discover Old Charlie with a peculiar grin on his face and a lighted fire-cracker in his hand. All the other men were having fits of laughter. As the manager of the fireworks pitched a lighted fuse in my direction he drawled:

“Why son, laying abed ain’t very patriotic. Don’t you know this is the glorious Fourth, the day we were sot free from Britain?”

*The Recoil of
Circumstance*

BY

FLORENCE MAUDE FARRER





"Under one umbrella they turned the corner and disappeared."

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IT is inexpressibly good of you to come and help me to kill time while I am shut up in these rooms, Katydid. Do come in every time you have half an hour to give me; but for the love of the saints, don't let anyone get an inkling of my hiding place! Nobody must know but you and Jack. I can trust nobody else not to give me away."

She surveyed her fine figure in the mirror, in passing, gave her splendid hair a touch, and beamed her welcome on the petite Kittie, who, true to her name, was making herself comfortable among the cushions of the couch.

"Yes," she continued, "I'm a prisoner here, while the editor of *The Sunrise* is on trial for criminal libel. You know I am wanted for a witness, and I don't dare go on the stand without incriminating myself. They have spotters out everywhere looking for me, and I can't show my red head out of doors for fear some bailiff will put a hand on my shoulder and read a bench warrant to me. And it is death to live inside the walls of this little flat—death to one who is in love with the outside world, as I am."

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"You seem to be comfortable enough. Can't you entertain yourself? Read something; write something."

"Never! I don't read. Don't read anything but reference books. I don't take my impressions of life at second hand. I leave that to the decadent and the dilettante. I want life itself and more and more of it. I want experience; action; contact with the world. I want to live through events and take part in them. For the same reason it does not satisfy me to sit tamely at the theatre and watch the play from a box; I want to go onto the boards and play a part myself. No, I won't accept life at second-hand, Katydid, Katie dear."

"Then why don't you write something? You certainly have had experience enough with life to write about it."

"Yes, I can write. Wait until I get old and I will write—write memoirs. But I must live life to the uttermost, first; and just now I am too busy at the game itself to stop to explain how it is played."

"Since writing is your business, yours and mine," returned the Katydid, "I don't know why you should denounce it so savagely. It is the bridge that carries us over."

"Yes, Kitten, I can write while the fever is on and the blood is hot. A reporter can write by the midnight oil and turn out good copy, when he is just in from a tragedy in the tenderloin, where women drink life's lees and aloes and leave the world by the suicide road; or fresh from a

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ceremony at the altar where a pistol shot in the hands of a jealous lover answers the chime of the wedding bells. Then, we can write; then we *must* write to work off emotion and clear the mental atmosphere. But sustained writing, from reflection and contemplation, never! It is intolerable to me. I want to drink the draught from the fountain head. I must find it in the street; at the roulette table; at political headquarters; anywhere where men and women meet and measure skill in the game of life. All I know I have gotten by contact, observation, experience; and I have lived more life than half the people who number twice my years.

“And now, Kittie, I simply must do something to kill time and I have a plot that will shock you and Jack—only Jack shall not know of it until it has gone into history; but you shall see it through with me. It is too good to keep all to myself; I must share it with somebody. Here, in this corner room, I can see the world go by and cannot mingle in it; but it shall feel my influence before I go. I shall make that strenuous street corner my stage while this trial lasts, and I shall manage it, myself, and make those people furnish me with entertainment. I must live in the world of action or die; I must see human forces at work. This corner of Twelfth and Firloch streets shall be my theatre of action and you shall watch the world do my bidding. We are going to have some fun while we wait here, my Katie, while we wait, my Katydid! Next time you come to call on the tenant

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in flat 25, you shall see the curtain rise on my melodrama.

“Here is a little preamble that will give you an idea of the way the game is worked. Oh! I haven’t been a detective and a police reporter and a dozen other things, all for nothing! I know human life, as you say, and human nature, and I can play on human feelings, if anybody can. I shall at any rate strike a few discords on the harp of life while we wait, Katie mine, while we wait.”

“You called it a game, awhile ago.”

“Never mind, if I see fit to change my metaphor, it is not for you to question, dear. Just listen to an ad. which I shall insert in the personal columns of *The Sunrise*, tomorrow:

‘A man of the world, not yet gray, of good appearance, endowed with a liberal education and a liberal supply of worldly goods, would like to meet an attractive woman, mature enough to be entertaining. Please wear a small bow of white ribbon on your sleeve and be at the corner of Twelfth and Firloch streets at 4:00 p. m., to-morrow.’

“That will bring the women out. Now, we want something that will catch the men. Here is one that will go into *The Evening Roundup* and this will bring the men:

‘A refined woman, somewhat past her first youth, something of a dreamer, one who has had no particular past, but who would like to have a future, would be glad to meet a gentleman who can furnish some entertainment and, possibly, give her a new outlook on life. Will wear a white ribbon knot on her wrist for identification and be at Twelfth and Firloch streets at four, to-morrow.’

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"The same people will not read the same ad.; or if they do, they will think it a coincidence; or whatever they think, they may come if they want to. The more the merrier was never truer than in this case. They will come from all directions and we will stand at the window in the shadow and watch the pantomime and pick the winners as they come."

"It is all clever, Isobel, and amusing, but it is unscrupulous. How can you! how can you!" pleaded Kittie.

"Be my guest day after tomorrow at four," Isobel, went on, laughingly, "and I promise you some fun. Look for white ribbons on the way. You are the only one in the secret, except Isobel Knight, reporter, detective, woman of intrigue, fugitive from justice and student of human nature. Now, let me go and call a messenger and dispatch these little peace disturbers and then I'll come back and talk to you."

"Do you know, Katie," she went on, returning from the hallway, "do you know I am the most unhappy woman alive, and I must do something all the time to keep from thinking? And do you know you are the dearest thing on earth to come and comfort me when I am shut up here to keep out of the hands of the authorities; when I have just had a row with my sweetheart and have sent him away, and can do nothing but sit and sing my miserere and plot confusion for maids and men, to keep from thinking of my sins? Yes, you are the best friend in the world, if you did say Jack Dare is a flirt."

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"Who said Jack Dare is a flirt?"

"You did. You said he flirted with Bird Grimes."

"You said it yourself."

"Katherine Doyle, you can tell more whoppers without blushing than any woman I ever knew, except myself. But it makes no difference who said it, Jack does flirt, and that is what is killing me—not my sins. And every time I cut him or sting him for his stupidity he goes off and flirts with somebody to get even; and I grow furious, though I know he doesn't care a cigarette about Bird Grimes, or any of her kind. Men get tired of caustic women, in time, and sometimes I think Jack is getting tired of *me*."

"Yes, dear, it is hard for a woman with a cutting tongue to keep friends."

"Yes, or a woman with a selfish heart, like mine. Go on and preach. I knew you had come to preach the minute you came in the door. Say I can't keep my friends, as you have told me a thousand times. Say I've played off one against another and sacrificed one after another for my own selfish amusement until they have all dropped me. But, oh! Kittie," dropping into a softer tone, "I am not going to break with *you*; and if I should have to give up Jack, I'd turn on the gas and call the game off. Poor Jack! whom I have had so long, working his life away; working until his beautiful head is growing gray trying to get money enough to marry me, because I won't marry him without money! If I call it all

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off and turn on the gas, some day, will you come and watch with me, Katydid?"

"Isobel, stop talking that way," she commanded, "he is not going to drop you and you are not going to die of asphyxiation. Jack's love for you has withstood so many tests, that it is not going to break now. But do be good to him. Now, talk about something else. You have got to change the subject. Whose black-eyed baby is that on the back porch making love to me through the glass door?"

"But whenever I hurt him or sting him, he goes off and flirts in retaliation, and it's maddening. I am afraid there will come a day when he will not come back to me. I am afraid that I cannot hold him always. I had a break with him just before I moved into these quarters and I sent him away. I have sent for him to come back, too, but he hasn't come."

"Isobel, I have forbidden you to talk about him. I shall leave your house, if you bring back the subject again."

"Yes, I'll stop, I'll stop! but you know he had and old love, once—or a young love, I mean, and they had some kind of a rupture and she married somebody else. I only know the bare facts and I can get nothing more out of him. It's all in the past and it's dead, but it's maddening to have even the ghost of a woman between us. Oh! don't go, Kittie! Don't leave me to my meditations! I've nothing to do but meditate and if you leave me I'll eat morphine; smoke opium; drink absinthe—anything to keep me from think-

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ing about Jack! I'll tell you all about that tangle-haired baby and the woman who owns her, if you will only stay."

"She's trying to break your glass door with a broom handle. I'd like to kidnap her. Where does she belong?"

"In one of the back flats across the hall. Her mother paints china and starves."

"Who is her mother? Why don't you get acquainted with your neighbors, if you want to kill time? There is no danger in it. You are here under an assumed name, anyhow."

"Don't want to; am not interested in her. A sorry-faced woman who paints china! Why should I cultivate her acquaintance?"

"You ought to be interested; it's a reporter's business to be interested in everybody."

"Oh! yes, in a general way. When one is on the trail of a good story, everyone is interesting who has any connection with it, but who could be interested in a woman who was silly enough to permit herself to be named Penelope? Her name is Penelope Webb, so the postman says, and she ought to be spinning and weaving and ripping and raveling all day and night to make good that name. It would be a hardship to me to have to live up to a name that had been made and gone into history before I was born. But she neither spins nor weaves nor waits for Ulysses, so far as I can determine. She paints china."

"Then you are interested, if you have been interviewing the postman about her."

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"No, he volunteered the information, he is a loquacious chap; but to be candid, I have a sort of grievance against her, though I've never spoken to her. She's pretty; too pretty for her surroundings. What right have impoverished widows who live in back flats and paint china and keep troublesome babies, to be pretty."

"Yes, that is so logical, Isobel, that I think you ought to try to impress her with the importance of it and see if she can't improve the matter. But I must go. I am overdue at the office, with my story of the trouble in the Chinese quarter, and I must invent some excuse for the delay."

Isobel followed her to the door, protesting, and had to set the baby out of the way to make a passage for her friend down the back stairs by which way she was to make a short cut to the office. "If you break that door, I'll throw you down stairs," she said to the big-eyed wondering baby, as she closed the door. Throwing herself on the couch with her hands behind her head, she went on addressing the baby through the glass, as if she heard and understood.

"I'd fall in love with you, you little demon, if it were not for your pretty mother. I'm called handsome, myself, and I don't want a widow in the flat across my back hall who is a close second to me," she went on, her tone softening in spite of herself. Then her eyes drifted to the ceiling and she was lost in meditation. Occasionally she laughed aloud. She was apparently not thinking of the trial nor of Jack. She was think-

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ing of the fun she should have when the gullible public gathered on the corner in answer to her advertisement. Would she have softened, if the next day, she could have seen the picture of a little woman in a back flat bending over the morning paper, opened at the personal column? Would she have recalled her plot if she could have heard the words sobbed out over the printed sheet: "I cannot starve and let my baby starve! I cannot work; I have never been taught to work and I am so incompetent that nobody will have me! But I cannot starve and I cannot eat painted china; and nobody will buy it. I recoil from the thought of meeting that man," she went on, breaking into fresh sobs, "but I cannot help it! Let the angels be my judges and let those who will throw stones, I shall pin on a white ribbon and go and see what he wants." Would she have softened? However, it was too late, now, the game had gone beyond her control and the little widow in the back flat was in the hands of fate.

Kittie arranged with some difficulty to keep her assignments and smuggle an hour to attend Isobel's entertainment. She reached the flat a little before four and found her friend arranging the curtains to give the best view and yet screen them from sight.

"It isn't good form," she was saying, "to stand at the window and gawk out, and, just now, it isn't good policy."

"It's good form for a reporter to do anything within the limitations of the statutes," answered

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Kittie, "but I agree with you that it isn't good policy, if you don't want some chance acquaintance in the street to spot you."

"The curtain doesn't rise till four, but we might stand here and listen to the orchestra," indicating with her hand an organ grinder on the corner, bareheaded in the rain, holding his hat appealingly toward the upper windows. "There are so many umbrellas on the street that I imagine it will be difficult for us to see white ribbons. This rain is the first obstacle that has come up to interfere with my little comedy, but we shall have the performance just the same. I know you don't more than half countenance what I am doing, but you lack humor, my dearie; you lack what the book reviewers call the saving grace of humor. You are too serious and too conscientious to ever get much fun out of life. I confess I am a little low on the phrenological bump of conscientiousness; but let us study human nature from the street while we wait for the curtain. It is the most fascinating of studies and you don't get it from books; you get it from heads and faces, voices, attitudes; every outward expression means something so definite that he who runs may read, if he can read at all. Look at that old fellow paddling down the stream of life. Analyze him a minute; see his thick head and pugnacious nose. Watch how he plants his feet widely apart. He would be invulnerable from any point of attack. You couldn't argue him down nor laugh him down, nor stampede him; he is not of the kind to be frightened.

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"But here comes another interesting character. She was born for generalship. Look at Caesar's nose. She is commander-in-chief of the family, I'll warrant, three generations of it. Just now she is in trouble of some kind. I think she has a case of insubordination on her hands; probably having trouble with her daughter-in-law; doesn't like the way the young woman is bringing up the baby."

"Maybe she's out after some of our white ribbon girls," remarked Kittie. "Maybe she has seen your ad."

"It's two minutes to four," rejoined Isobel, "something ought to happen shortly."

"Oh! stand back," exclaimed Kittie in a low tone, "there are some reporters coming down on the other side. Tom Andrews is one and the other looks like Jack! Don't show yourself until they get by."

"I wouldn't have Tom Andrews know where I am for the world, Kit; I couldn't trust him not to give me away; but I am dying to see Jack. I know he wouldn't tolerate what I am doing, but I wish I could see him just long enough to tell him how sorry I am; but I must keep in the dark. Watch every movement on the street, Kittie."

"Never mind, Tom is going on and Jack is coming across. I think he is coming up here."

"Oh! the old darling!" exclaimed Isobel, excitedly.

"Look, Isobel, he has stopped to talk to somebody—a woman—a shabby sort of a—"

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Coming cautiously forward, Isobel gasped: "Oh, Kittie! it's the woman in the back flat. It's Penelope Webb! And saints and sinners, she's got a white ribbon around her wrist! What have I done! what have I done! They are both here in answer to my ad! They are here on my invitation! He's flirting right under my window and under my nose! I'm caught in my own trap! I am the biggest fool born since the stars were hung in heaven!"

"But they seem to recognize each other, Isobel—they are not strangers. She looks as if she were going to drop, and Jack is all agitation!"

"Jack Dare, if you take her arm I'll smite you dead," interrupted the stage manager. The drama was becoming too real for her. The woman in the street reeled. He caught her arm and led her as rapidly as he could through the crowd. Under one umbrella, they turned the corner and disappeared.

"They are going off together! For God's sake, Kittie, stop them! Go after them! Stop them, or I'll brave the whole police force and go myself! Go! go!" And she pushed Kittie violently toward the door.

"Isobel, you are insane! I am not an officer; I cannot arrest them, and they have a right to walk down the street together, if they want to. I am not going to make a scene and get myself written up in the newspapers."

Isobel tramped the floor and raged. Soon, through the open door, they heard voices on the

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back stairs, followed by footsteps passing Isobel's door. Then they heard Jack's voice, in softest undertone, saying: "My darling, my darling! After all these years! I am getting gray, and I haven't much money, but I can take care of you, dear. Stop crying! Stop crying, darling, until we get into the house, and then you may cry all you want to."

Isobel sprang to the door, to see two figures disappear into the hallway of the rear flats, leaving a dripping umbrella outside. She stood still for a minute, clutched at the door, clutched at her throat, then staggered forward and threw herself, sobbing, on the couch.

A Doubtful Nationality

BY

ELLIE MILLS LEE



"The bluffs that loomed so close and vanished into dim and dimmer distance."



A Doubtful Nationality

THAT "little matter of unfinished business" disturbed Richard Abrel. He gazed back over the glorious perspective of wooded bluffs and narrow sea as the Alaska liner chugged her way down the homing waters of the Sound. The late afternoon sun rent the curtain of mist with shafts of orange and red, and their reflection clothed the vessel's wake in ever-varying splendor; but he sensed only the bluffs that loomed so close and receded quickly into dim and dimmer grayness—they reminded him of the shifting ways of the widow.

A laugh that was joy itself and a few bars of song informed him that on the other side of the deck he might find an opportunity to further that "business."

"Fine evening, Mrs. McGuire," he said, as he approached a comely woman standing beside the port rail.

"An' is it yourself, Richard?" she retorted, without turning.

He laid a firm hand on her arm as if to compel attention.

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"Mrs. McGuire, you haven't told me whether you'd take me or not."

"Listen to the man, will ye? Can't you take yourself? Sure, an' ye look able-bodied enough." Her roguish eyes measured the ample height of him.

"An' what would I take ye in—a ban'-box or a wheelbarrow? An' then, me foine man, if ye don't moind tellin' the loiks o' poor me, where is it ye want to be taken?"

"Ah, now, stop your chaff an' tell me plain if ye'll marry me?"

"Haven't I told ye that I promised me dead Mike that I would niver marry anny one but an Irishman?"

"I'm Irish, if that's all."

"Ah, go on with ye! How can the loikes of you be calling himself an Irishman? Niver a bit o' the brogue do ye speak."

"My parents were Irish and I was born in Cork. That certainly ought to make a fellow Irish."

"An' there's yer name—Richard Abrel. With a shlight change it would be Abrams, an' that would make a Jew of ye."

Richard smiled in spite of himself. The widow's banter, though exasperating, always amused him.

"McGuire," she went on. "Now that is a name with the true imerald color. Blessings on the head of me dead Mike, savin' the bald spot. I used to tell him that he had wather on the brain and the hairs fell in and were dhrowneded."

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At the mention of the much-quoted Mike, Richard ground his teeth till an ominous creak warned him, and his set jaws relaxed.

"Let us forget Mike's hair and think of other things. There's that fine house and all I could give you, not to mention my devotion and love."

She turned slightly toward him as she answered: "You're a foine man, an' I won't be sayin' yer money'd be no use to me; but tell me what would a healthy Irishwoman be doin' with the name of A-a-brel?" The thought was so productive of mirth that the widow's well-formed figure rippled with laughter.

"Mrs. O'Brien and Mrs. Donahue come to call, spreadin' their dresses out grand on the best parlor chairs, would ask all tinder and solicitous: 'What is it yer new man is, Kate? Is he Fr-rinch, did ye say? Or is he a bloody Englishman?'"

She took a step toward the rail, and leaning over, shook her head in mock despair, as she added: "I'd be thinkin' a long time before I'd change the good name of McGuire for one loike that."

They were nearing the harbor. West Point Light threw a shaft of gilded green across the murky water. The modern city of the seven hills gleamed in her electric jewels as she offered a welcome to the returning Argonauts of the North.

Civilized joys dreamed of and so long foregone were again made real as the bright-colored harbor lights danced in the water.

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The man moved to the side of his companion and stood fascinated by the night-beauty of the city. Off there in the distance the gleaming sparks represented home with all the comforts and the companionship the word bespoke. The vision accentuated in his mind his own evaded question and the necessity of getting a decisive answer before the wharf was reached.

“Mrs. McGuire, you have been thinking a long time.”

She looked up with her accustomed levity, but met a look of firm determination. With a shrug she tried to free herself from his detaining gaze, but his love-eagerness enveloped her and temporarily smothered her banter.

“If you have nothing against me you wouldn’t let the little matter of a name hinder you, would you? I feel sure, dear heart, you could love me. And what’s in a name? One’s as good as another if it is honest. For, sure, the one I’m offering hasn’t the true Hibernian flavor—no Mc’s nor O’s in it. It came from Ireland just the same, and if you’ll only take—”

He ceased abruptly and drew back. Something seemed to fill his mouth and choke further utterance. Putting up his hand he offered some pantomimic explanation and hastily retired to his cabin.

With a surprised catch of the breath the widow looked after the retreating figure of her suitor.

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"What ails the man, annyhow? He acts loike something sthuck in his throat. Faith, an' I be-lave it's his name," laughed she.

The boat was fast nearing the dock. Shorter grew the bars of colored light from the red and green will-o'-the-wisps which were resolved into wharf lanterns. Peering eyes of the returners searched for half-forgotten landmarks while their hands groped confusedly for baggage.

In his cabin Richard Abrel spit out the fragments of his collapsed dental structure, and cursed the fate that made false teeth a necessity; or, since they were, damned the dentists who lacked ingenuity to make the plate unbreakable.

Here he was, with his fate undecided, and the precious moments slipping away. The idea of not being able to persuade the charming widow to make a decision, because his teeth gave way, was maddening.

In the midst of his agitation he remembered that he did not know her address. She was going to stay with her sister, she had told him. But where did her sister live? He recalled the myriad lights adorning the hills and wondered how in perdition he could determine which one was nearest her. While he hated to encounter her raillery at his changed appearance, he knew he must learn the street and number before she left the vessel.

The steamer no longer moved, and the noises from the dock told him the passengers were dis-

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embarking. He picked up his traps in haste, and, muffling his face, made for the gang-plank.

Among those crowded around he failed to discover the widow. Neither did he see her familiar figure in the stream on the wharf.

Down dropped his heart, as does the thermometer in the land he had recently quit. If she had disappeared into that labyrinth of streets and houses he knew he would play at long odds in finding her. With a lingering hope he kept his eyes on the pier. Out of a shadow at the farthest end stepped two figures, and his love-quickenened eyes recognized Mrs. McGuire. The slight girl beside her seemed inclined to haste, but the widow lingered.

"Oh, can it be for me, or is it natural perverseness?" he thought.

In desire he leaped to her side, but his physical efforts were tied—held prisoner by that multitude of other efforts—a moving crowd. He strained forward and the perspiration dripped down his face. There was, however, no place to stop. By the law of the crowd he could only shuffle off the plank like a miserable card in a deck, and at any moment she might make up her mind to hurry.

At last his feet swung free and he raced up the pier, to see the two women disappear around the corner of a warehouse.

When he again caught sight of them they were crossing Railroad Avenue at Yesler Way. Redoubling his haste, he hoped to overtake them before they reached the cable car. Up the cross

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street he turned, close in their footsteps, when a train, the puffing engine of which he failed to see, obstructed his path and shut them again from his view.

In rage he stamped up and down, ineffectively searching some course for advance. The train, however, soon passed and he resumed his pursuit. Crossing at Pioneer Square, he saw the two women step from the curb and board a Yesler car.

A sigh of relief escaped him, for he felt that at last he could reach her. As Richard drew near he determined to board the car and, following unobserved, learn the address without accosting the widow.

There was still half a block to the car when the conductor sounded the bell. He sprinted, made a grab for the bar, missed it and took the wet pavement on his elbows. Futile seemed his struggle when, borne back to his despairing ears, came the familiar, musical brogue:

"Where was it ye said, Aggie? 217 Tinth Avnoo South? Why, that's the same old place you used to live."

Richard Abrel arose, bespattered but happy, and without delay found a hotel. When shown to his room he made some perfunctory attempts to remove the evidence of his fall. Catching sight of his face in the mirror and noting the change effected by his dental mishap, he exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be damned! If I don't look like a deserted claim with the sluices half down!"

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Taking out his watch and observing that it lacked some minutes to nine, he determined to see something of the town before retiring.

After about an hour's travel along First and Second Avenues and Pike Street, meeting as he went many acquaintances who "celebrated" his return, he found himself again at the Yesler terminus. His carriage had a military erectness, although his walk was somewhat uncertain.

The "unfinished business" of the day was brought to his mind when he viewed again the scene of his accident. He repeated the address he had overheard, "217 Tenth Avenue South."

Gazing around at the brilliantly lighted streets, he concluded that it could not be very late; so he determined to call that very night and make her give him a decided answer.

A gleeful chuckle expressed his satisfaction at the decision, but hard on its heels came the remembrance of the vacant upper chamber of his mouth. With a groan he realized how impossible it would be under the circumstances to force the jovial widow to seriousness.

Moved by a weariness born of his dashed hopes and frequent libations, he sat down on some steps near at hand. A showcase on the opposite side of the door excited his curiosity.

He arose and gazed at the displayed articles with fascinated eyes. Taking a step forward, he remarked: "What comes to your hand, take, says I." There was a shiver of broken glass as outward shot his fist. He selected something from the contents. After a few maxillary twists,

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Richard Abrel found that what came to his hand fitted very well in his mouth.

No one was near save the Italian peanut vendor, who turned at the sound of falling glass. In astonishment he viewed the shattered showcase and the scene enacted there. Richard, becoming hazily conscious of the Italian's scrutiny, gave him a confiding wink as he went by, up Yesler Way.

On up the hill with a free stride—almost too free at times—he took his way till he reached Tenth Avenue. To the south he turned with the determined step of a would-be conqueror. When he reached 217, he saw the house ablaze with lights. Music floated out, and through the lace curtains he discerned the moving figures of young people.

A girl at the piano was playing a movement so stirring that it made his heels uneasy. Into the middle of the room whirled the widow, giving voice and motion to the melody. Through the open door came tones which had made heavenly many evenings on the voyage down.

“Lads and lasses to your places,
Up the middle and down again,”

she sang, as her sprightly figure moved in graceful pantomime. Richard cautiously ascended the steps to gain a nearer view of his enchantress.

The playing stopped suddenly, as the girl at the piano turned on the stool and exclaimed: “Oh, Aunt Kate, do sing grandma's song! I want my friends to hear you.”

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"Ah, go on wid ye, Aggie! What for would an ol' woman loike me be takin' the floor at a young folks' party?"

Importunities came from all sides, and Mrs. McGuire was at last prevailed upon to grant her niece's request. She mounted a low chair as Aggie again took her place at the piano. After the opening chords, the widow began:

"A female auctioneer I am,
I don't come here with pelf.
The lot that I now have in hand
It is to sell myself.
I am going, going, cried she,
Who bids for a wife in me?"

The spirited action and alluring voice of the widow thrilled her unseen listener. "Going, going," suggested to Richard the possibility of loss. He turned, and passing in at the open door, quickly made his way to the parlor. Oblivious of the astonished guests he strode forward until he stood before his evasive charmer.

"Who bids? Why, I do. Haven't I been bidding all the way down from Alaska?"

The company caught its breath with a gasp, and the widow gave a little scream on sight of him. She, however, quickly recovered her composure, and said:

"Sure, an' if it ain't Richard himself." She covered her face with her hand in mock modesty. But Richard Abrel this time was not to be put off with playfulness.

"Mrs. McGuire, I have come determined to have—" but the remainder of his speech was

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drowned in the heavy tramp of feet as a policeman, followed by the Italian, hurried in.

Advancing into the room he looked at Richard, and inquired of his companion:

"Is this the man?"

"Oh-a, yes. Dat ees-a da man."

"You come with me," said the officer, laying a compelling hand on Abrel's shoulder.

"I haven't time," replied Richard, with an effort to shake free. "Mrs. McGuire, will you—"

"Come, come, my man; none of that. Walk along quietly and you'll have no trouble." He tried to draw Richard peaceably to the door.

"What do you want me to come for, anyway?" asked Richard, turning to the policeman in irritation.

Before he could reply, the little Italian bobbed accusingly in front.

"You break-a da box; you steal-a da glass tooth. See?" He pointed a suggestive finger into his cavernous mouth.

Richard's shoulders drooped as a misty recollection came to him. He put his hand to his mouth, but glancing at the widow, quickly removed it.

During the excitement Mrs. McGuire had climbed down from her improvised rostrum. She approached the representative of the law.

"Go on wid ye, now! Ye wouldn't be takin' the word of that little Dago," with a deprecatory brush of her hand, "agin that of a dacint-sized man, would ye? Sure, an' he's done no har-rm. Jist come to call on his frinds quoiert loike."

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Turning to her lover, she added: "Spake up, Richard, an' give thim the lie."

A dull-red wave of confusion mantled Richard's face, while he remained silent.

"What would ye be wantin' a set of false teeth for, annyhow? Haven't ye a foine—"

She stopped, and her expression changed as if by recollection. Smilingly nodding her head, she continued, addressing herself:

"Faith, thin, it was something more than the name that sthuck in his throat."

Sitting down, Mrs. McGuire laughed. When she had finished a good measure, she laughed again. Every time she looked at Richard, her risibilities were excited anew.

The greater the widow's merriment, the more indignant became Abrel. Exasperated, he rushed from the house, closely pursued by the policeman and the Italian.

With ease they took him to the City Hall. In the office he discovered that his trip "down the line" had so decimated his cash in hand that he had not sufficient bail. There was nothing to do but spend the remainder of the night in jail.

Wearily he sank down against the wall of his cell. With frowning brows he brooded over the disastrous outcome of his nocturnal escapade. The widow's laughter was a hornet that wounded his vanity at numberless points. For the time being she seemed unworthy of pursuit.

He was roused from his reverie, as along the corridor hurried a flood of feminine invective.

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"Aw! the dir-ity place. That murderin' rapscallion of a policeman to bring anny one here. If iver I get me two hands on him!"

The voice stopped as the jailer swung open the door of Abrel's cell. In bounded a familiar figure.

"Richard, Richard," came in rolling accents as Mrs. McGuire peered into the darkness.

Richard, however, felt abused and did not rise with the wonted haste that cry begot. Seeing that he sat unmoved against the wall, she crossed and knelt beside him. Tender solicitude was woven in her question.

"Richard, darlint, are ye hurt?"

She paused, but receiving no answer, continued: "If iver I get a chance at that ongracious spalpeen that dhragged ye here, I'll take a bit iv the concait out of 'im." And the widow shook her shapely fist at an imaginary bluecoat.

"I followed ye jist as soon as I got a bit of money, for I was afeared you'd have none by ye, an' I couldn't have ye shtay in jail the night. Come, now," and she coaxingly attempted to assist him.

He made no attempt to uprise, but settling back, fronted her determinedly. Inarticulate was his voice, but his tone was firm: "Mrs. McGuire, you haven't answered my question."

For a moment there was no reply, while the widow repressed a gurgle; but when it came Richard recognized a love-softened bit of the old scintillation.

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“Faith, Richard, me own, I’ll forgive ye your name, for it’s mesilf knows no one but an Irishman would be shtealin’ a set of false teeth.”

Old Bill's Awkward Squad

BY

ALICE HARRIMAN-BROWNE

Author of

"Songs o' the Sound," "Chaperoning Adrienne," etc.



" 'Taps blowed!' Bill exclaimed feebly."

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LD BILL rose to go. The drummer noticed that he carried himself with military precision, although his head shook slightly, as with palsy.

"Better stay in town to-night, Bill," suggested the station agent, with kindly inflection. "It's bitter cold."

The drummer shivered as he turned from the window to the warmth of the big stove. Would his belated train never come? A man came into the waiting-room, cold air entering with him. He walked noisily to the ticket window, spoke to the agent, then sat on a tool-box, idly. From a door opening into the room back of the telegraph office a glimpse of a woman rocking a child could be seen. Her soft lullaby crooned its sleepiness, which the rhythmic creak of her chair helped to induce. Bill listened to the song. The agent's advice and the other men were unheeded.

"She sings like the Colonel's lady," Bill muttered, nodding in the direction of the agent's wife. "Our Colonel's lady's bringin' Bobbie up

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jes' right, an'—" his voice trailed off into incertitude. He passed his shaking hand over his forehead, dreamily. The agent and telegraph operator, a man of few words and many duties, turned his eyes in the direction that Bill was gazing, and they softened at the sight of what made the whole world to him.

"Where you going, Bill?" inquired the drummer. The old man made no reply, but pulled on his mittens, worn to ravelled thumbs. As the drummer had left the west-bound train, the early winter twilight had revealed nothing but this tiny, dull-red depot, a one-story store with a rough board nailed on the unpainted door, with "Post-Office" rudely printed on it; three or four board-front and log-sided saloons, with dirt roofs, and the unending prairie. The train, as it sped on its way, dipped below the horizon as does a ship at sea. The steel rails became as one in western and eastern converging perspective. The world seemed empty of life except this meager settlement huddled close to the railroad track. Far to the south a dark strip against the snow showed where the leafless cottonwoods bordered the melancholy Missouri. The loneliness was like a pall.

"Better stay, Bill," repeated the agent, busy with his reports. "We'll make a shakedown for you, if you don't want to go over to the store."

"Ye're welcome to come," put in the man on the tool-box, to whom the traveling man had nodded as his customer of the hour previous.

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"Where you going, anyway?" persisted the stranger, shaking down the stove. "I shouldn't think that there was a house within a hundred miles of here."

With his hand on the door-latch Old Bill looked in surprise at the drummer.

"W'y, I'm goin' to the post. Where'd ye s'pose? There's a hop over to the gym to-night, an' the Colonel's lady'll be 'spectin' me to look after the awkward squad. That's what me'n the Colonel's lady calls 'em. They's Bobbie, an' Clara, an' John Hancock, an' Angel Chil'—a hull raft of 'em. Bobbie an' Clara's sweetheart's a'ready—the little tikes! And they ain't more'n eight—think o' that!" The old man laughed, in loving glee. He squared his shoulders consciously, proudly, feeling the responsibility of his trust; but he looked pitifully thin, and too lightly clad. "I can't stay, reely," he added, turning to the other men, "thank ye kindly."

"Well, 'f ye're boun' to go, Bill—"the store-keeper rose unexpectedly and ripped off his big buffalo coat, "ye wear this! I shan't need it to-night." He thrust Bill's arms into the sleeves, buttoned the coat hastily, turned up the collar with a jerk, and avoided the men's eyes. "There," he said, heartily, "that's better! Ye c'n bring it back when ye come in agin."

Gratitude beamed from the veteran's eyes as he rubbed the thick fur. "I los' *my* buffeler coat w'en the Injuns was out, las' fall," he said. Then he went out and the creak-craunch of his foot-

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steps on the frozen platform was audible until he took the ill-defined trail.

"The post!" ejaculated the drummer, giving his chair a hitch nearer the fire. "What's the man talking about? And Indians! Were they on the warpath last fall? I didn't see anything in the papers. I thought—" he moistened his lips, "I thought the Indians were civilized!" He glanced furtively at the window, half expecting to see gleaming, cruel eyes peering. It was his first trip West.

The trader tapped his forehead. "Cracked," he explained. "Old Bill's never been right in his mind since '78. Injuns scalped his kids right before his eyes, an' took his wife—bound to a cayuse's back. Bill 'ud 'a killed her himself 'fore he'd let her be took; but he was shot 'mos' to pieces, an' couldn't git to her. The Tenth came up, jes' too late. Saved him; but the woman—" He sighed, and puffed furiously at his cob pipe. The drummer shuddered at the picture thrown on the canvas of his imagination.

"Bill stayed with the Tenth," went on the storekeeper, presently, "an' finally 'listed. He was mad to kill. I was post-trader when the Tenth was here. The fort was right in this bend of the Missouri then. After a while Old Bill got queer, an' took to shakin'. The Colonel's wife pitied him; an', as he was gentle, an' always gittin' the kids 'roun' him, she had him take care of em', odd times; mos'ly w'en there was any doin's at the gymnasium—dances an' sich. 'Twas the putties' sight ye ever seen w'en he

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drilled the officer's chil'un! Lord!" The old-timer looked with reminiscent eye toward the smoke-grimed ceiling. "'Twas surely great!" he added, dreamily.

"Queer I didn't see any fort," commented the drummer, making way for the agent, who brought a scuttle of coal and banked the stove for the night. "Where is it? And how many companies are here?"

"Oh, the post's been abandoned this twenty year," replied the trader, surprised. "Didn't ye know? What's lef' o' the buildin's are clost to them cottonwoods south o' town."

"Why was Old Bill left?" The drummer showed his disapproval.

"Why?" repeated the agent, his work over, and inclined to join in the conversation. "It's just this way. Old Bill wouldn't go. After the troops went, some of the buildings were sold and moved away. Of the rest, 'most anyone who wants boards or brick goes over there (it's only two miles), and helps himself. But the hospital and gymnasium, and part of officer's row, are standing; though they're pretty well gone to pieces. Old Bill lives in the hospital."

"What on?" asked the drummer, bluntly.

"God knows!" was the equally blunt reply. "His eight per—his pension, I suppose. We've tried to persuade him to go to the Soldiers' Home. But he won't listen to it."

"Bill thinks they're all here yit," added the trader, glad to gossip through the long evening. "He'll come to my store, like w'en I was post-

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trader, an' buy little things fer the kids, an' tell how the Colonel's wife trusts him. 'Twould break yer heart! One c'n slip in things that one knows he needs, he's so muddled-like," he concluded, with a guilty air.

The telegraph operator went to the outer door, opened it, and gazed over the vague whiteness of the plain, lighted by a crescent moon. "I can just see him," he called back. "I wish that we hadn't let him go. Like's not he hasn't a stick of wood or coal in when he gets home—and he's old. Poor devil!" A sharp call, rapidly repeated, of his office, came insistently, and he hastened to the key.

"It's a shame those army officers who knew Old Bill couldn't look after him!" The drummer was indignant.

"Oh, you know how 'tis with army folks!" excused the trader, easily. "I seen in some paper that the Colonel died soon after he left here; an' the res' jes' nachally scattered. The kids were too small to remember a doty private, o' course."

"You're out of luck," interrupted the telegraph operator, again coming to the waiting-room. "A special's out, and everything's sidetracked for it—regular No. 4, and all. Some high mucky-mucks evidently. The wire isn't working very well, and I couldn't make out exactly; but I understood that they're to stop here."

"For water, perhaps," suggested the trader.

"Likely," was the noncommittal reply.

"I'm a little late—a little late," Old Bill muttered as he neared the dark line of trees and

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the still darker shadows of the abandoned post. He breathed heavily as he tried to hasten, and his shadow wavered grotesquely in the waning moonlight, as he walked against the wind. The big fur coat made his thin legs look even more thin. "Taps blowed!" he exclaimed, feebly. "But how the lights are shinin' over on officers' row!" The moonlight struck glancingly on the broken window-panes of the buildings, as he continued: "An' look at the gym—lighted from sullen to garret! There'll be dancin' there 'til mornin', I'm thinkin'!"

After Old Bill entered what had once been the general ward of the hospital, he built a rousing fire of driftwood, and the rusty stove glowed red. He seated himself contentedly and began to arrange sundry small packages on the pine table. "I'm not late, after all," he said, as he glanced around. "No one here yit!"

The walk and the keen air had made him sleepy. He drowsed, and the fire burned low. The door opening into the hall, hanging loosely on its creaking hinges, swung open in the draught and the noise aroused him.

"I'm right here, ma'am!" he said, apologetically, as he rose hastily and saluted. "I didn't hear yer knock. Sweet's a picter ye look, 'f ye'll 'scuse me sayin' so. An' here's Bobbie! Grows more like his pa every day he lives—the breathin' image!" He bustled around, straightening the ragged table cover, and setting his solitary chair near the stove for his imaginary visitors. "The Colonel's waitin' fer ye outside, d'ye say?"

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Very well. Don't worry 'bout Bobbie. W'y, he's mos' nine, ain't ye, Bobbie? Ye'll be safe with Old Bill, won't ye? We'll have a drill, d'ye say? Sure! I'll put ye through yer steps, never ye fear!" Then Old Bill held the door as wide as in the days when he escorted his colonel's wife to the steps, and he bowed as low. Returning to the room he smiled at the vision of a curly-haired boy, and stirred up the dying embers in the stove, a few sparks responding brightly. There was no more wood.

"Look what a gran' fire we've got to-night, Bobbie!" said the old soldier, briskly. "The striker didn't bring in much wood, but this'll do. It's drefful cold w'en all that blaze don't warm the ward, ain't it, eh?" He shivered, uncontrollably. "Run, lad! Open the door! There's a knock!" The door swung open once more, for the wind was increasing, and a swirl of dust from unswept halls rushed in. "There ye're, chil'en—a hull raft of ye! Come in! come in! Clara, yer ma's fixed ye up like ye was goin' to the hop, 'stid o' comin' to stay with Old Bill! Henry, stop lookin' an' peekin' into them packages! John Hancock, git off'n the cot! Come here, Angel Child! An' 'f I live, 'f here ain't baby! Never come to see me before! Don't be scared of Old Bill! I won't hurt ye!"

The old soldier walked to one of the high, uncurtained windows, his arms bent as though holding an infant. "Look, baby! yer ma's right over there, a-dancin'! Ye'll be there 'fore many years, breakin' all the young officers' hearts,

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same's ma did 'fore she married pa!" The deserted gymnasium loomed dark and forbidding across the bleak road, except where the flashing starlight struck the few remaining window-panes. A lonely coyote howled mournfully, his nose uplifted to the heavens. "Hear the fiddles, chil'en?" Bill inquired. "Crowd up clost to me an' ye'll hear an' see. 'Money Musk!' as I'm alive!" He jiggled rheumatically, and pressed his face eagerly to the window. "See yer pa, Bobbie? Ain't he grand! Now scamper back to the fire, all o' ye!"

The old man rambled on. Now he lifted one visionary form to his knee as he sat in his rickety chair, then another. He told stories; he chided one for crowding and stroked the curls of a shadowy form as his fancies prompted. He folded the buffalo coat, and, thinking that it was the baby, laid it on his narrow bed and tucked the worn army blanket tenderly around it. He wandered restlessly from the stove to the window; from the door to the cot, and, as the night wore on, he again slept, with hands stretched toward the empty stove. A timber wolf's cry woke him, and he rose stiffly.

"I know, Bobbie, I know! Yes, it's cold. I mus' liven ye up. Henry, tuck in the baby. Hark! How plain we c'n hear them fiddles! They're playin' '*Home Sweet Home*!' That's always the las' waltz—hear it? 'There's no-o place like ho-o-me!'" He sung the line with quavering, broken tones. "Now, les' have our drill! We've been dre'ffly slow. Don't make much

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noise, boys, or ye'll wake the baby!" The wind shrieked as it swept around the corner of the building, and Old Bill frowned. "There, you've woke her! Quit yer cryin', baby, an' I'll hol' ye while the res' drill; an' ye can be a part o' the awkward squad." He straightened himself with painful effort.

"Squad!" he said, in a clear, full voice, "Attention! Fours right! March!" The order was given commandingly. The numbness of cold, the stiffness of age, the quaver of palsy, were gone. Once more Old Bill was young, drilling his little company of children—long since grown to man-and womanhood.

"Squad, halt! About face! Forward, *march!* Bobbie, the guide is right! Squad, halt! Yer feet's cold, d'ye say, Henry? So's mine! John Hancock, don't ye step on Clara's heels agin! Right, dress! Front, right face! You, Angel Child, ye've faced wrong! P'raps ye're too young to know right from left. I'll show ye."

Sleighbells sounded; but he did not heed. A rap came, but he heard it not. The door opened, this time by human hands, and a man in a long military cloak looked expectantly into the ward, lighted only by the star and frost-gleam. The moon had set. The candle had burned out. The fire was long dead.

"And this is Old Bill!" began the new-comer, heartily, as he saw the dim outline of the lonely figure. But the storekeeper, behind, pulled him back, hastily. He whispered, cautiously:

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"Hadn't we best not be too abrupt, Captain? The old man's imaginin' somethin'. I'm 'feared 'f we speak too sudden, an' he sees who ye are (to think little Bobbie's grown to this—so like his father!) he'll not only be doty, but he'll *stay* so, which he ain't all the time now."

"You're right!" assented the captain, taking the hand of a small boy in his and stepping just inside the door. The child, with wide eyes, looked around, curious and not a little afraid of the gloom.

"Yes, that's Old Bill, Bobbie," the Captain answered his son's whispered question, "of whom mama and grandma have told you so often. By jove!" he turned to the trader, "Bill thinks that he's drilling his old awkward squad! Listen to his commands! Poor old fellow! I don't see how we got the notion that he was dead. Clara heard something of this, somehow; and nothing would do but we should stop to-night to inquire, although we're hurrying on special orders to Washington. I've just returned from five years in the Philippines, you know," he explained, parenthetically.

"Yer wife ain't changed a mite, sense she was here," put in the storekeeper.

"Clara wanted to come in the sleigh, too, but I persuaded her to stay in the car while the regular passed us here."

In the meantime, Old Bill had been going on with his drill. The whole scene had taken but a few seconds. The Captain felt that he could

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look no longer. Action! He was too much like his father to await events.

"I've got to do something!" he exclaimed, his eyes moist. "It's too pitiful. I'm so glad that we inquired! I'll see that he's looked after— Say! I know how we'll rouse him without danger. Bobbie, old boy, Old Bill's playing that he's drilling mama and me, just as he used to. Don't you want to fall in and do as he says, as you have so often played with me?"

The upright little figure took a step forward, as Old Bill called out to his shadowy awkward squad:

"Mark time, *march!*" Bobbie fell in as a dancer catches the swing of a waltz. Bill's foot beat time heavily. With the gravity of half-fear, little Bobbie held his form erect, rigid.

"It's tragic!" whispered the captain. "Just so we followed Bill's every move! How gray his face is! Bobbie," he whispered, "tell Old Bill you're tired."

"I'm sure a-goin' to stop this tom-foolishness!" broke out the trader, forgetting his previous caution. "I can't stand for it no longer! I had no idee he was a-freezin' down here! I can't never forgive myself!" He spoke louder than he thought.

"I'm tired, Bill," said little Bobbie.

"Tired? All right, we'll stop. Why!" he looked at the men in the door, "there's yer pa. So the hop's over, Colonel? Jes' watch 'em drill a minute—it'll s'prise ye, how well they do! Now chil'en, fall in, fer the las' time! Squad, atten-

Old Bill's Awkward Squad

tion! Forward, *march!* Guide right! To the rear, *march!* Squad, halt! About face! Rest!" As the closing order was given Old Bill staggered and rubbed his chilled hands. "The squad's improvin', Colonel!" Captain Bobbie nodded. Words came hard just then. "Tell Old Bill, Bobbie, that he's to come with us," he whispered. "Tell him that mama and grandma want him to come." The lad stepped to the veteran's side.

"Bill," he began, timidly. Bill looked at small Bobbie and around the room. His head began to shake, and memory revived. He was dazed, irresolute.

"Where's the res' o' the awkward squad, Bobbie? I thought—I thought—"

The child's soft voice interrupted, and he pluckily repeated what his father had suggested.

"What's that?" asked Old Bill, half comprehending. "Go home with you? To live? Don't ye live here?" The past and the present were irrevocably mingled. "No, I remember, ye went away long ago. I can't leave. What'd the Colonel's lady say if I deserted?"

The Colonel's grandchild stood at a loss for words, but pulled at the faded sleeve of blue. The Colonel's son, Captain Bobbie, put in persuasively:

"What if the Colonel's lady sent for you?"

"*Did* she?" The old man was stern.

"If grandma knew that you were here, cold and lonely, she'd come for you herself," cried little Bobbie, bursting into tears. "Oh Bill, please come!"

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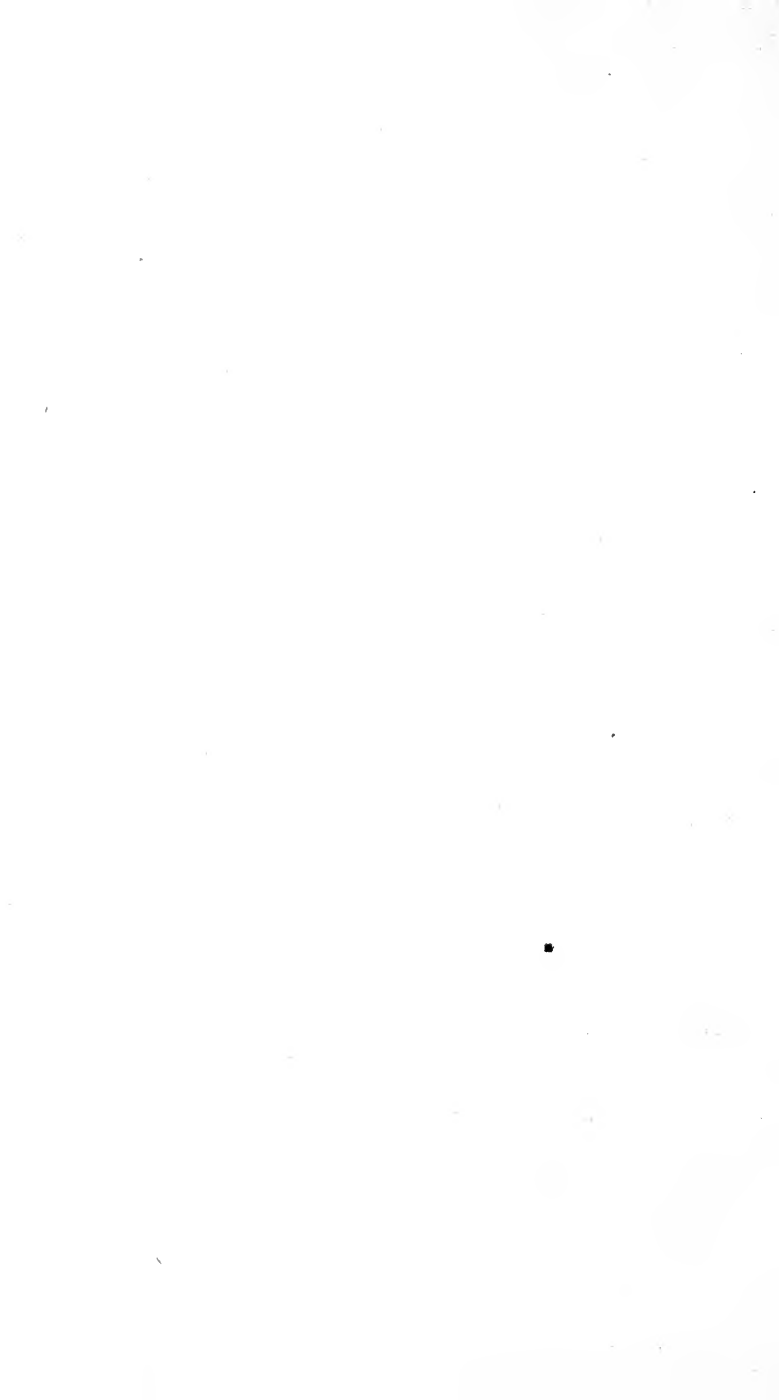
Old Bill hesitated, then he lifted his head feebly, shook back his thin white hair, took little Bobbie's hand and walked toward the waiting men.

"All right, Bobbie! 'F the Colonel's lady 's sent fer me—I'll go. Why, Colonel," he interrupted himself, with a look beyond and above his hearers at a vision that made him give for the last time the old salute, "have—*you*—come—fer—me?"

The Burglar's Dilemma

BY

WILLIAM DOUGLAS JOHNS



The Burglar's Dilemma

This satire is dedicated to the Seattle Writers' Club and directed toward the great reading public who view and criticise literature from their individual and conventional ideas of what Life should be—not as it really is.

WHAT'S the matter, Joe?" said I. "Out with it. Maybe I can help you. You know I'm safe."

Joe looked around as a matter of habit before he answered; though we were in a cozy back room in a quiet part of town, that the police, even, had never dropped on to. And then he said:

"I wern't goin' to say anythin' about it, Bill, but bein' as yer were a college sharp afore you took to burglin' and has come up from the bottom to be the envy of the perfesh, perhaps you kin give me some help out 'n your wide experience."

"Out with it," said I.

"Well," says Joe, "you see I belongs to a Burglars' Club."

"What!" said I, nearly jumping out of my chair, "a Burglars' Club!" and I looked at Joe a trifle dubiously. He had been acting queer, lately.

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"Well, it's this way," said Joe, "it's a new thing."

("I should say so," said I)—"and I was interjuiced a while back by a friend; it's composed of professionals and comin' ametoors who wants to increase their knowledge o' burglin' as a profession and likewise the profits of the same; leastways that's wot he told me; and I've attended several meetin's.

"At each meetin'—which is held reglar once every two weeks, 'ceptin' when some of the leadin' members has pressin' engagements they can't escape from, or bail ain't a-comin'—some member tells o' some job he done—how he done it—and, if he's so minded, how much swag he got and what he done with it. Then every one tells what he thinks o' the job—how it could 'a been done better and how they'd a' done it. You see that's wot it's done for—to make 'em all wise."

"Well, I'm dashed," said I, "how does it work?"

"That's wot's a worryin' me," said Joe; "you see there's some on 'em that does their jobs pretty much alike, and they jumps on any one as does his'n different. There's Reckless Tom—you know when he sees anythin' that looks good to him he'll go after it in a hurry and mostly lands the stuff.

"He was going by a house not long back, in the evenin' an' seein' it had a deserted look—you know a feller can smell them things sometimes—gave a look around, saw nuthin' alarmin', walked up to the door, tried it and walked

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right in. Takin' a bit o' candle he had in his pocket, he lit it, shaded it with a brass bowl in the brickerbrack and started explorin', findin' the people must ha' left in a rush, fur a lot o' close was scattered about.

"He noses aroun' and finds a lot of vallyble joolry hidden away and some other stuff. He cleans it up and walks out. It looks queer to him, but he axes no questions in the neighborhood—just makes his gitaway good.

"And what do you think—they jumps on him hard when he tells of it. '*That* was no professional work at all'—'he hadn't piped off the house'—'had no idea of it before he went in'—'he orter had a lookout to give him warnin' in case o' trouble'—'he hadn't no dark lantern'—'nor a jimmy.' It just makes me weary to think o' all they said he orter a' done to a' done it right; *and him a' gettin' away with the swag!*—a bunch that'll keep him a-goin' fur quite a time.

"Then Smooth Sam, he tells how one of the housemaids who he keeps a-stringin' tells him o' a woman that had a lot of joolry that she thought so much of she kep' it in her bedroom with her nights; seemed like she couldn't be away from it and woke up nights to look at it. Seems that some of it was bought fer her by a lover who went to South Ameriky to make his fortoon and died afore he could come home; this was sent her 'cordin' to his direckshuns. Her housemaid had told Smooth Sam's mash all about it; and only two servants in the house. O' course Sam gets acquainted with the maid, lets on he's goin' to

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marry her and finds out the whole plant. He makes a key to the back door, from the one his mash uses—stays late one night and slips into a back entry, instead o' goin' home and arter she's asleep, unlocks the door, goes up stairs and hears the lady talkin' to her jools, and how she loved the man what bought 'em for her, and how they was such a comfort, as they showed he was dead stuck on her, too.

"When she went to sleep, he jes goes in and picks 'em up—no trouble at all—and makes an easy gitaway; there was a good bunch o' money, too. Did he get the glad hand—*not much!* They ripped him up and down and sideways. Same old howl—'twarn't according to rooles.

"But that warn't the worst. One feller that has a wife and kids and goes to meetin' and always gives somethin' outen every haul to the church, gave it to him hard fur takin' the jools that wur sent her by her dead lover, and fur spendin' it scandlous; for Sam, you know, gets gay when he can, an' he takes a pal and their two girls and makes a lively trip to New Orleans and takes in the Mardy Grass. Think o' that talk in our profesh!

"An' another guy that is gone on a girl what's givin' him de double cross for a bartender—tho' he don't know it—hands him a solar plexus for deceivin' the housemaid an' playin' on her affections. Wot's the deceivin' o' housemaids got to do with makin' burglin' a go, I'd like to know?

"Honest, Bill, it keeps me guessin' as to where some o' them mutts has been a hidin' therselves

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from the world, since they cut loose from their mammies. Think o' 'em givin' that kind o' talk w'en all we gets out o' life is the gay times we have w'en we make a raise! And this, w'en the club is fur givin' new members a straight tip as ter the best way o' burglin' and gettin' away with the stuff—which is the proof of a feller's makin' good.

“Now wot's a worryin' me is what I'm a-goin' to do, for its my time, soon, to give 'em a spiel—you know Bill, I'm a little quick actin' sometimes, and when some one unexpectedly gets in my way, they sometimes meets with an accident; it's all in the business, you know—you've been there, I'm told—now, I'm askin' no questions Bill—just mentionin' it to show you I feel you can understand how things are. Well, if I was to tell any little thing like that, they would some on 'em have a fit, instead o' pointin' out how I could a' done a slicker job. It ain't right and I don't know what to do. If I go an' try to do a job their way instid o' my own, I'm dead sure to get pinched, and if I tell them my way o' doin' they will pound me up bad.

“Now, you have a long head on yer shoulders, Bill, and maybe you can tell me how to climb out.”

“Quit them,” said I, “they are running in a groove, and don't know a thing out of their special lines.”

“Oh! but they do, some on 'em,” said Joe. “They're a bright bunch in lots o' ways; but you're right about their runnin' in the short

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track an' never gittin' by the grand stand. Then I like 'em," said Joe, "an' I like to hear 'em; it's enlighten'in' in some ways. What I wants to know is, how to play their game without gettin' the worst of it."

"Well, Joe," said I, "it's a hard one to crack. I don't want to see you get into trouble, and I see it coming both ways. You must not get pinched, and about the hardest thing I know of is to educate people out of something they are dead stuck on and think they know all about. I hardly know what to advise you, old man." We smoked awhile in silence, drinking our beer and thinking it over.

"Don't they know any better, Joe, or are they just talking because they don't want to go against the crowd for fear they will think they don't have the right hunch?"

"Blow me, if I know," said Joe. "Sometimes I think they don't come out and stand by burglin' as it is, as they 'ot to, an' then, agin, they seem too straight for anythin' like that."

"Don't they know anything about the big guns and the way they do their jobs," said I.

"That's it," said Joe, "they must have heard ev'n if they don't know 'em. A bright bunch like that and not know wot's agoin' on; sure they must. And them a meetin' to improve their burglin' an' a cuttin' the real thing when there's somebody hurt, or a guy tumbles to a new rig, or raisin' a howl w'en a feller spends his money fer things he sure wants. Wy, there wouldn't be no life 'er joy in the perfession at all, if some on

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'em had their way: Wy some on 'em seems to think that if they gives up part of the swag to the church it squares the whole thing; makes all they done before O. K.; seems to really believe it. I'd hate to go before the Big Judge wid that talk—I sure would."

"Human nature is a queer thing, Joe," said I, "and its inconsistencies are like turtles' tails—the turtle can never see them."

"Lucky thing for 'em," growled Joe, "some on 'em ain't hansum."

"But they help make fine soup in the hands of a good cook, Joe."

"Maybe," said Joe, "but yer gettin' away from me; yer always do w'en yer commence preachin'; a lift is what I'm lookin' for."

"But I know what I'm a-goin' to do. I'm a-goin' to give 'em the straight tip on some kinds o' burglin' that they don't seem to know about, or if they do, don't seem to think ought to be told of. Burglin' is burglin' and if we are goin' to study it, we want to study it as it's done, and not as some o' 'em thinks it orter be. We ain't no Sunday school."

"Stand by it, Joe," said I. "They can't more than skin you and you will know more after it's over."

I am waiting with much curiosity to hear from Joe after he gives them the "straight tip." If I had not been advised that strict seclusion is necessary at this time for my health, I would like to attend. I have an idea the meeting that

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night will be interesting. They won't "squeal" on him, because of the way he does business—that wouldn't be professional—but after they give him the hot mit for his methods they may give him the marble hand and the icy stare on account of his morals. This is a strange world, gentlemen. I'd like to be there.

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